

Israeli premiers gang up to change election law

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Two former Israeli premiers from either end of the political spectrum joined forces Thursday to call for the law which brought Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to power to be overturned. Former Labour Party leader Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Shamir, a member of Netanyahu's Likud Party, announced the formation of an association to repeal the law providing for the direct election of the prime minister before the next poll in 2000. The current law says the prime minister, directly elected for the first time by the Israeli people in May 1996, can only be ousted with a two-thirds majority, or 80 votes in the 120-member parliament, the Knesset. Mr. Shamir said the law had resulted in the introduction of too much "personal power" while Mr. Peres said it had caused serious damage to the democratic process.

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Arab League ministers to meet in September

CAIRO (AFP) — The Arab League said Friday that foreign ministers from its 22 members will hold their next meeting on September 20 and 21 at the organisation's Cairo headquarters. The ministers, who meet twice a year in March and September, called during their last gathering for Arab countries to freeze normalisation with Israel in protest at its hardline stance towards the Palestinians. September's meeting is likely to address a Middle East economic summit planned two months later which Qatar has said it will host despite an Arab boycott threat because of an invitation to Israel to attend.

Algerian Islamists deny reports leader is dead

PARIS (AFP) — Algeria's most hardline Islamist group on Friday denied reports that its leader had been killed by security forces. The denial came in a statement from the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) that was sent Friday to the MED1 radio station in Tangiers. A copy was sent to Agence France Presse. Informal sources said Thursday the GIA leader Antar Zouabri was killed on Tuesday along with several of his lieutenants in an army operation west of Algiers. There was no official confirmation of his death. MED1 on Thursday said it had received a telephone call from a man claiming to be a high-ranking GIA member, named Mohammed Redouane, denying that Mr. Zouabri had been killed. "Zouabri is not dead," the radio quoted the caller as saying. "He is still alive and fighting alongside his troops."

Arafat to meet Mubarak on Saturday

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat will head to Egypt Saturday to meet with President Hosni Mubarak for consultations on the peace process with Israel, a top adviser said Friday. "President Arafat will meet with President Mubarak within the next 24 hours to fill him in on the latest developments in the peace process," Mr. Arafat aide Nabil Abu Rudeina told AFP. The two leaders will discuss the results of Mr. Arafat's meetings this week with Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy and the head of Israel's opposition Labour Party Ehud Barak, Mr. Abu Rudeina said.

Israelis oppose unilateral withdrawal from south Lebanon — poll

TEL AVIV (AFP) — More than two-thirds of Israelis are opposed to a unilateral troop withdrawal from south Lebanon, according to a poll published by the daily Yediot Aharanot Friday. Asked whether Israel should withdraw before reaching an agreement with Syria or Lebanon, 69 per cent of those questioned said no while 25 per cent said yes and 6 per cent said they had no opinion. Half of those questioned are hostile to any concessions to Syria to allow the Israeli army to withdraw, while 44 per cent are in favour and six per cent said they are without opinion. The survey questioned 504 Israeli Jews and has a margin of error of four per cent.

IAF decides to boycott House elections; five leaders resign

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Shura Council of the Islamic Action Front (IAF) decided on Thursday to boycott this November's parliamentary elections, abiding by the decision taken earlier this month by the Muslim Brotherhood.

In protest against their party's decision, five of the IAF's most prominent moderates, including the party's secretary general, Ishaq Farhan, handed in their resignations on Thursday.

The IAF decision was taken with 80 votes in favour and 16 against and was announced by a brief communiqué which did not specify the reasons behind the boycott. However, a party source told the Jordan Times that a statement explaining the reasons behind the decision will be issued today.

Ninety-six of the 120 Shura Council members were present at the three-hour meeting.

The IAF, which won 15 of the 80-member Lower House seats in the 1993 elections, became the fifth

political party to announce the boycott of the elections, to be held according to a government official, on Nov. 4.

The parties which announced on July 20 their decision to boycott are the Jordan People's Democratic Party (Hashd), the Jordan Arab Constitutional Front, the National Action Front and Al Ansar.

If a meeting of the leaders of 11 opposition parties, scheduled for Monday, is to endorse a general boycott decision, only the pro-government National Constitutional Party (NCP) and a few insignificant small parties will be participating in the elections.

Though taken with an overwhelming majority of over 83 per cent — while, according to the movement's chief Abdul Mujeed Theibat, the Brotherhood's Shura Council resolved to boycott the elections with a majority vote of 63 per cent only — the IAF decision has already widened the traditional division between "hawks" and "doves" within the front's higher cadres.

The voting suggested that hard-liners in the IAF are

gaining ground, and the resignations of Dr. Farhan and his colleagues could be read as a protest against the trend currently prevailing in the front.

The other members of the 17-strong Executive Committee to resign were Financial Affairs Secretary Ahmad Tanash, secretary Mohammed Awaidh, IAF spokesperson Hamzeh Mansour, and IAF deputy Bassam Emoush.

The five did not participate in Thursday's meeting, neither their resignations were discussed by the Shura Council, which was convened with the only purpose of discussing the elections boycott.

According to the front's internal regulations, the resignations of Dr. Farhan and his colleagues will be effective only after being officially accepted by the Shura Council.

The resignees expressed on different occasions last week their disagreement with the Muslim Brotherhood's boycott resolve.

In a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, early last week, Dr. Mansour expressed disapproval of the Muslim Brother-

hood's decision and stated that "the boycott is against the interests of the Jordanian people and the development of democratic life."

In his weekly column in Al Ra'i Arabic daily, last week, Dr. Emoush rejected as inadequate and illogical the Brotherhood's explanations for the boycott.

The Muslim Brotherhood listed the 1994 peace treaty with Israel and normalisation of ties with the Jewish state, as well as the one-person, one-vote system and recent controversial amendments to the 1993 Press and Publications Law as the reasons prompting its boycott decision.

Dr. Emoush objected to such reasons saying that the Brotherhood should have called on its deputies, who sit in the Lower House under the insignia of the IAF, to resign when Parliament ratified the peace treaty. He also noted that the Brotherhood participated in the 1993 elections, also held with the one-person, one-vote formula, and questioned whether public freedoms were more extensive back at that time.



Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert standing outside his offices Friday with the Old City of Jerusalem, including the Dome of the Rock, and the Mount of Olives (behind, right) visible. He had just given a press conference defending the Israeli decision to build a Jewish enclave in the heart of Arab east Jerusalem. The decision by the Jerusalem City Council to allow a U.S. Jewish businessman, Irving Moskowitz, to build a settlement of 132 units in the Ras Al-Amud Arab neighbourhood (seen, top, far right) has infuriated Palestinians (Reuters photo)

Israel gives authority to build new settlement in Arab east Jerusalem

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli authorities in Jerusalem have given the green light to a new Jewish settlement in the Arab east of the city, in a potentially explosive move which Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to stop Friday.

The Palestinians branded the plan a "declaration of war," coming amid a four-month crisis in the peace process sparked by the building of another settle-

ment in occupied Arab east Jerusalem.

Jerusalem's Municipal Authority, led by rightwing Mayor Ehud Olmert, authorised an American millionaire to build 70 Jewish homes in the heart of the Arab neighbourhood of Ras Al Amud Thursday.

Mr. Netanyahu sees that the building is legal but has pledged to "find a way to stop this project from seeing the light of day for the

time being," his spokesman said.

The prime minister "feels it is not appropriate to build in the middle of an Arab neighbourhood at this time," his press adviser David Bar Illan told AFP.

The project "has obtained all the necessary legal authorisations, so there is no way to attack it on the judicial front," he said, but added that Mr. Netanyahu

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Tarawneh says Jordan has no initiative to solve peace crisis

By Sa'eda Kilani
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan has no plans to undertake any new initiative to break the deadlock in Palestinian-Israeli peace talks as the Kingdom continues to extend full support for the Egyptian mediation efforts to get the two-party negotiations back on track, according to Foreign Minister Faysal Tarawneh.

The minister said that Jordan was in no position to come up with initiatives at this particular time but emphasised that it pursues contacts with all sides to boost peace efforts.

In a meeting earlier this week with the editors of the Jordan Times and its

sister Arabic daily Al Ra'i, Mr. Tarawneh said that serious efforts are being made by various parties to save the peace process from collapse but there hasn't been any breakthroughs. "Jordan is in no position to offer its own initiative, but it continues to support Egyptian mediation to break the deadlock," he said. "Any Jordanian initiative should be made in coordination with Egypt."

"Jordan is also pursuing its contacts with Israel in a bid to achieve what is best for the Palestinians."

The minister did not comment on the visit of Israeli opposition leader Ehud Barak to Jordan on Monday. He only said that

it was an ordinary visit that is similar to the King's meetings with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu when the latter was an opposition leader.

In a report on the short visit, the English language Israeli newspaper, the Jerusalem Post, quoted Mr. Barak, the head of the Labour Party, as saying that the "urgency of the visit (was) a reflection of the depth of King Hussein's concern, similar to the concern expressed by Mubarak last week... and his worry about the danger of armed conflict between Israel and the Palestinians."

A Jordanian-Egyptian summit between the King and Egyptian President

Hosni Mubarak is expected to be held later this week, according to published reports. But no official announcement had been made in this regard.

The foreign minister, underlining the importance of Arab joint efforts, refuted arguments that the Egyptian moves have been unsuccessful so far and stressed that contacts are still underway to make them bear fruit. All parties, however, seem to agree on keeping negotiations away from media's eyes so as not to generate negativities and cause further complications to the peace process.

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Tarawneh says improving refugee living standards does not settle them

By Ghaila Alal
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Foreign Minister Faysal Tarawneh defended the Social Safety Net programme and said that improving the living conditions of the poor does not have ulterior motives.

In an interview with the Jordan Times earlier this week, Mr. Tarawneh said Jordan is keen on fighting poverty and unemployment while successfully pursuing economic and political reform plans.

"Improving living standards of refugees does not mean that Jordan is trying to settle them," Mr. Tarawneh said. "There are 235,000 refugees among the 800,000 people living under the poverty line and who need assistance. Jordan is helping to alleviate their suffering."

The Social Safety Net is an inclusive programme aimed at improving the quality of life in the less fortunate areas on non-discriminatory basis. The

social productivity package was introduced a few months ago and is expected to be implemented on short, medium and long-term phases.

Minister Tarawneh said that political and economic reforms have not been highly appreciated so far because of internal and external circumstances that have hampered their proper development, but pledged that dividends will be felt in the near future.

The reforms "are going to hurt us at the outset, just as it is the convalescence phase of a patient. But this transitional period will come to an end soon and will bear a beneficial outcome in the long run."

He also pointed to the recent meeting with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) that ended successfully.

"There was no doubt that Jordan did very well in the first round of negotiations. The talks were highly successful," Mr. Tarawneh, former

ambassador to Washington, said Jordan has been diligently working on upgrading its economy and improving its industry to meet international standards. It has also introduced a new set of economic legislations to encourage privatisation, steps which are bound to streamline the Jordanian economy into the global economy.

The minister stressed the importance of liberalising the Palestinian economy and trade. He also regretted that Jordanian-Palestinian trade exchange is still insubstantial.

"We have always put the blame of the absence of trade exchange between Jordan and Palestine on Israel's occupation," he said. "We should start looking into the other obstacles that are hampering such an exchange on both banks."

"We have to take practical steps to promote commercial exchange. It is a vital issue in the liberalisation of Palestinian trade," he added.

Israel snatches Jihad man from PNA territory

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Israeli undercover forces snatched a wanted Islamic Jihad activist from a PNA-ruled West Bank enclave in a violation of peace agreements, Palestinian security sources said on Friday.

They said an Israeli force dressed as Arabs spirited Ghassan Mahdawi from a Tulkarem park late on Thursday. In protest, the Palestine National Authority (PNA) halted joint patrols with Israel through the city.

The Israeli army confirmed it had arrested Mr. Mahdawi, who it accused of setting up a "terrorist gang" to carry out attacks on Israelis, but refused to say where it had captured him.

Butler, Iraq draw up action plan on disarmament; both sides optimistic

BAGHDAD (AFP) — U.N. disarmament chief, Richard Butler, said Friday he had drawn up an action plan with Baghdad on the elimination of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and hoped to see progress in a matter of weeks. "We have designed some work tasks in each of the areas of missiles, chemical and biological weapons that we will now implement in the weeks and months ahead," Mr. Butler said as he wrapped up a five-day visit to Iraq. Mr. Butler, the new chairman of the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) for Iraq's disarmament, said he hoped "that in three or four weeks time we may see some concrete and practical results."

He hailed what he called "a new spirit of cooperation between Iraq and UNSCOM and a new sense of determination to get done, as soon as possible, the job of eliminating Iraq's weapons of mass destruction."

Mr. Butler arrived in Kuwait later on Friday to brief the Kuwaiti government on his first visit to Iraq. The UNSCOM head said

in Kuwait he held a "number of one-on-one" talks with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz as well as "full-scale technical and plenary meetings with large teams from both sides."

"I thought that on the whole I got a positive response" from Iraqi officials, Mr. Butler said. He also talked of the plans that had been worked out. "Those plans address the weapons systems in the three baskets — missile, chemical and biological — where it is important that Iraq come forward and give more to the commission on those baskets and what's in them, so that we can verify that and hopefully empty them," he said.

Asked if he found any evidence Iraq was concealing weapons or weapons capabilities, he said: "I don't want to answer that question because it would go into the substance of private consultations and at this stage it wouldn't be helpful to our progress for me to answer that question."

Swedish diplomat Rolf Ekeus, Mr. Butler's prede-

cessor, accused Iraq of hiding its weapons secrets. Baghdad charged that Mr. Ekeus was spying for the United States and fabricating negative reports to have U.N. sanctions kept in place in line with U.S. policy.

Kuwait officials said Mr. Butler's visit here would include meeting on Saturday with Emir Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah, Acting Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah and other officials.

"It is very important to me to have the opportunity to hear the views and concerns of the government of Kuwait at a very senior level about the tasks that UNSCOM is obliged to undertake on behalf of the Security Council," he said.

Mr. Butler is due to travel to Bahrain on Sunday.

The Australian diplomat arrived in Baghdad on Monday vowing to be "absolutely fair" in his dealings with Iraq and to steer clear of any political confrontation.

Iraq has vowed to cooperate with the new UNSCOM chief and make a fresh start,

Palestinian official encourages meetings with 'hardline' Israelis

CAIRO (AFP) — The right-hand man of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat said an interview published Friday he wants to hold talks with "hardline" Israeli officials like ministers Ariel Sharon and Raphael Eytan and former Minister Benny Begin.

Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestine Liberation Organisation's (PLO) second-in-command, told the Arab newspaper Al Hayat that "the Palestinians must be heard by these people and (my) meeting with Ariel Sharon occurred in this context." Mr. Abbas met Infrastructure Minister Sharon, a leading hawk in

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing Likud Party, in June.

He said he would like to meet Agriculture and Environment Minister Eytan, Justice Minister Tzahi Haneghi, former Science Minister Begin, who resigned in January, and Uzi Landau, chairman of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee.

Mr. Abbas, also known by his nom de guerre Abu Mazen, said these men "have so far refused to recognise our right to exist, reject the agreements with Israel and exert all their efforts to torpedo them."

He said meeting with the Israeli "hawks" is not a "waste of time" but can help "change their ideas and positions."

"The fact that Sharon agreed to meet me proves he accepts in principle our existence," the Palestinian official said.

The meeting was the first between a senior Palestinian official and Mr. Sharon, whom the Palestinians hold directly responsible for the Lebanese massacres of Palestinian refugees in the Sabra and Shatila camps in Beirut in 1982.

Mr. Abbas said that during the meeting, Mr. Sharon "recognised that the Palesti-

nians receive only a third of the water allocated to Israel and that the matter must be reexamined to be fair to the Palestinians."

Mr. Abbas, an architect of the Israeli-Palestinian peace accords, said he believed after meeting Mr. Sharon that he "still hasn't realised the significance of the peace that could be made with the Palestinians."

Mr. Abbas's interview came out two days after he held talks with Ariel Deri, the head of the ultra-Orthodox Shas Party which has 10 MPs in Israel's ruling right-wing coalition.

Tarawneh says Jordan has no initiative to solve peace crisis

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"Remember what happened when the letter His Majesty King Hussein had sent to Israeli Premier Benjamin Netanyahu was made public?" he said.

Last March, an uproar in the local and international media followed the publication of the strongly-worded letter, in which the King heavily criticised "Israeli obstinacy" towards the peace process and called on Mr. Netanyahu to abide by the agreements his country had reached with the Arabs. It was not before long that Corporal Ahmad Dakamseh shot dead seven Israeli schoolgirls.

Senior Jordanian officials have recently strongly criticised the Netanyahu government's attitude on resuming the negotiations with the Palestinians and Mr. Tarawneh echoed the criticism. But he also cited the lack of coordination and cooperation among Arab countries as a reason contributing to the stalemate in the peace process.

Mr. Tarawneh stressed Jordan's keenness on promoting dialogue among Arab countries as a prelude towards restoring Arab rights. He said Jordan's relations with Arab countries are good and with the Gulf states the relations are highly improving — but not with Kuwait though.

"We have to keep in mind that what happened to them (Kuwaitis) was not insignificant," Mr. Tarawneh also regretted the lack of progress made on the Jordanian-Syrian level despite Jordan's desire to see them improved.

"There are contacts on

the highest level with Syria. And we are ready for resuming coordination," Minister Tarawneh said. "It is high time to start thinking about forming a unified front. But we haven't received a signal from Syria that reflects its (willingness) to move in that direction."

The minister said that Jordan called for reactivating the Jordanian-Syrian joint committee to resume coordination on a ministerial level, but Syria has not responded yet. The committee had its last meeting in July 1990 and the Syrian ambassador left Jordan in 1993 without a replacement since then.

"We hope an ambassador will be appointed soon," he said.

As to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) economic summit that was scheduled to be held next November in Doha, the minister said Jordan has not contradicted itself and will attend the meeting if and when it takes place.

He pointed out that the Syrian and Lebanese decision to boycott was expected since both countries did not go to the previous summit that were held in Casablanca, Cairo, and Amman respectively. Boycotting the conference to express dissatisfaction with the Israeli position is not a valid argument, the minister said, since the overall political atmosphere this year is not much different from last year when the Amman MENA summit was held in the aftermath of Netanyahu's election and a couple of months after the Qana massacre.

The meeting in itself is important, he stressed,

"since it is a chance for the private sector from all over the region to meet. One is not obliged to initiate projects with any partner country if they do not desire to do so."

In a reply to a question over Jordan's assessment of the American position vis-a-vis the peace process, especially in light of the Congress' support for moving the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, the minister said the Clinton administration's stance was balanced.

"A difference should be made between the U.S. administration and the U.S. Congress. They should not be taken as an integral unit," said Mr. Tarawneh, who served as ambassador to Washington until his appointment as foreign minister in March. "The pressure (towards moving the American embassy to Jerusalem) was made by the Congress while the administration had always supported delaying the matter (until final status negotiations). It is a clear indication that the U.S. is keen on pursuing the peace talks."

"The Israeli lobby in the U.S. is influential and becomes more so each and every year, while an Arab lobby there does not even exist," Mr. Tarawneh said. "There is a Jordanian lobby, a Palestinian lobby, a Tunisian lobby, a Moroccan lobby, but there isn't an Arab lobby per se. Even Arab organisations in the U.S. do not coordinate stands and do nothing in their regular meetings but criticise American policies."

Israelis clash over assessment of Arafat

The Jerusalem Post

THE TERRITORIES are burning. General Security Service (GSS) head Ami Ayalon said as he presented his biannual report to the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee.

According to an official briefing, Ayalon said Hamas and Islamic Jihad have the capability and willingness to carry out attacks in Israel, including mass terror attacks, but Palestinian (National) Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat is not interested in terrorist actions which could harm his status and cut relations with Israel completely. Arafat, however, is interested in maintaining constant controlled conflict.

There was an unpleasant exchange between the GSS head and MK Ze'ev Begin (Likud) after Ayalon said Israel must decide whether it is interested in a strong or weak Arafat.

Begin apparently accused Ayalon of making a political judgement, while Ayalon said he only was presenting different scenarios. Ayalon said that the less progress is made in the diplomatic process, the more Arafat's status drops and the greater the standing of the rejectionists becomes.

Ayalon also said Arafat is beginning to present himself not only as the leader of the Palestinian people but also as the representative of Islam and Jerusalem. This could make the talks on Jerusalem more difficult, Ayalon said.

Ayalon frequently used images of "fire" and "burning" to describe the situation in the territories today.

"Sometimes the fire is on the back burners and sometimes on a higher light, but there are no quiet days," he said.



BAALBEK FESTIVAL LAUNCHED: Seventy-five Lebanese dancers of the Caracalla dance troupe perform on the opening night of the Baalbek festival late July 24 at the well-guarded Roman ruins in this eastern Lebanese city. The Baalbek arts festival has started again after abruptly ending before the 1975 civil war (Reuters photo)

Baalbek festival launched

BAALBEK, Lebanon (R) — Lebanese dancers performed in front of a majestic Roman temple to open the first Baalbek arts festival since 1974, symbolising the country's recovery from years of civil war and kidnappings.

"Our peace is not measured in words," President Elias Hrawi told about 2,500 invited guests assembled at the well-guarded Roman ruins Thursday evening. "Our peace is a will to live."

The performance by 75 members of the Caracalla dance troupe inaugurated a brief series of four festival nights that will culminate in the appearance of Cellist Mstislav Rostropovich next Wednesday.

When the festival abruptly ended before the 1975 season, it had become an established annual event drawing international stars. The civil war did not end until 1990 and by the late 1980s the Baalbek area of eastern Lebanon was known mainly as a stronghold of the pro-Iranian Hizbollah group.

In a reminder of the bloody past, old posters bearing the image of the late Iranian revolutionary leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini are still plastered about the ruins and adjoining town of Baalbek — the place where Western hostages kidnapped by Muslim militants in the 1980s spent years in captivity.

On Thursday hundreds of guards armed with automatic

weapons surrounded the site — containing some of the finest classical ruins in the Middle East — with extra forces positioned on roofs and in the Roman remains. An armoured personnel carrier with machineguns stood outside the entrance as guests filed in.

But Hizbollah members, while grumbling in the days preceding the festival that local people would enjoy no benefits from it, made no effort to oppose the resumption of what Lebanese leaders hope will again be an annual event.

Italian film director Franco Zeffirelli, joining invited diplomats and politicians at the performance, proclaimed

the festival a success.

It is a modest start. The previous festival in 1974, when Lebanon was last considered a prime tourist destination, had stretched over six weeks and attracted 74,000 people to its 32 performances.

The remains of the provincial Roman town in the Bekaa Valley, framed by the towering mountain Lebanon, once provided the stage for stars like Rudolf Nureyev, Ella Fitzgerald, Margot Fonteyn and the Bolshoi Ballet.

The ruins, which include the temples of Jupiter and Baachus, are shown on the Lebanese currency and are considered a symbol of the country.

Israel gives authority to build new settlement in Arab east Jerusalem

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may order it stopped for "security reasons."

Mr. Netanyahu held an emergency meeting overnight with his defence minister and with Mr. Olmert, a leading hawk in the prime minister's own Likud Party.

But Israeli Radio reported that Mr. Netanyahu was already under pressure from his right wing to allow the building to go forward.

The project was launched by Irving Moskowitz from Miami, well-known here for helping rightwing nationalist groups to buy up homes and land in a bid to turn Arab east Jerusalem into a Jewish-populated area.

The project, originally intended to comprise a settlement of 132 four-storey units, is for the benefit of a religious and ultra-nationalist Jewish

institution, Ateret Cohanim. Mr. Netanyahu's government approved the plan last December.

Ras Al Amoud, home to 11,000 Palestinians, lies just below the Mount of Olives in Israeli occupied Arab east Jerusalem. It will be the first time Israel has built a Jewish neighbourhood in the heart of a Palestinian district.

"This is a declaration of war against the Palestinian people and a dangerous provocation. What do you want the Palestinians to do now?" said Ahmed Tihl, an Arab Israeli advisor to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

Mr. Arafat's office called the decision "a violation of all the agreements" and called for the project to be aborted.

Palestinian Higher Education Minister Hanan Ashrawi said: "This is a dangerous and

destructive decision. This and Jabal Abu Ghneim and everything else they are doing in Jerusalem only show that this government is wilfully destroying peace."

"They must stop before they put us in a situation beyond repair," said Ms. Ashrawi, who also represents Jerusalem on the Palestinian Legislative Council.

The Palestinians walked out of peace talks with Israel in mid-March when work began on a 6,500-home Jewish settlement at Jabal Abu Ghneim, a hill on the edge of Arab east Jerusalem.

The groundbreaking at the site also sparked months of rioting in the West Bank which left eight Palestinians dead in clashes with Israeli soldiers.

Israel occupied traditionally Arab east Jerusalem in the 1967 six-day war and unilaterally annexed it as part of

what it declares is its united and eternal capital.

But Mr. Arafat, backed by Arab states, wants Arab east Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state.

The future of the Holy City, due to be tackled in final status negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians, is one of the most explosive issues in the Middle East peace process.

Mr. Netanyahu's decision to open an archaeological tunnel near Muslim holy sites in Arab east Jerusalem last September sparked three days of violence in the Palestinian territories which left more than 80 dead.

Since annexing the eastern sector, Israel has systematically confiscated land to build 11 Jewish settlements there while refusing to grant construction permits to Palestinian inhabitants.

As a result some 170,000 Jews live in Arab east Jerusalem, compared to 160,000 Palestinian inhabitants.

JORDAN TELEVISION

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PROGRAMME TWO

15:35French Programmes
16:30Doc. — In the World
17:30Blue Heelers
18:10French Programmes
19:00News in French
19:30News Headlines
19:35Neighbours
20:00Ties That Bind
20:30Prism
21:10Time Trax
22:00News in English
22:30MacGyver
23:15Feature Film

PRAYER TIMES

04:12Fajr
05:42(Sunrise) Dhuha
12:42Dhuhr
16:23Asr
19:42Maghreb
21:12Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifiah, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 637440.
De La Salle Church Tel. 661636.
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
622366
Church of the Annunciation

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Tel. 623541

Anglican Church Tel. 652826.

Armenian Catholic Church
Tel. 771331.

Armenian Orthodox Church
Tel. 775261.

St. Ephraim Church Tel.
771751.

Armenian International Church
Tel. 5516245

Evangelical Lutheran Church
Tel. 824328.

German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 845457

The Latter-Day Saints Tel.
654932.

Church of Nazareth Tel.
675691.

The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel.
614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Normal summer weather conditions will prevail with temperatures around average and winds northwesterly moderate to active. In Aqaba, it will be hot and dusty, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre637111
Civil Defence Department661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade617101
Blood Bank775121
Highway Police843402
Traffic Police896390
Public Security Department630321
Hotel Complaints605800
Price Complaints661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints897467
Amman Municipality Complaints787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)121
Overseas Calls010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs661101
Jordan Television773111
Radio Jordan774111
Water Authority680100
Jordan Electricity Authority815615
Electric Power Company

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Ann642816
Akileh Maternity, J. Ann642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity642362
Malinas, J. Amman636140
Palestine, Shmeisani607071
Shmeisani Hospital669131
University Hospital845845
Al-Muasher Hospital, 66722779
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali6641646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh775111/26
Army, Marka891611/15
Queen Alla Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery865199
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights is obtained on telephone (08) 52700 or (08) 523250.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:05Damascus (RJ)
09:45New Delhi (RJ)
10:25Beirut (RJ)
10:30Karachi, Dubai (RJ)
10:50Abu Dhabi (RJ)
11:00Colombo (RJ)
15:10Istanbul (RJ)
15:55New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:15Cairo (RJ)
18:05London, Berlin (RJ)
23:40New Delhi (add) (RJ)
02:30Madrid (RJ)
05:10Cairo (add) (RJ)
05:30Bangkok (RJ)
Other Flights
06:10Jakarta (GA)
07:05London, Damascus (BA)
13:00Riyadh (SV)
13:10Muscat, Abu Dhabi (GF)
15:05Vienna (OS)
16:30Dubai (EK)
17:00Doha (QR)
18:25Ankara (TK)
20:10London (GA)
21:10Paris, Damascus (AF)
22:15Beirut (ME)
23:45Amsterdam (KL)
01:15London (BA)
03:00Rome (AZ)
Royal Wings (RW)
(No flights on Saturday)
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:05Damascus (RJ)
09:45New Delhi (RJ)
10:25Beirut (RJ)
10:30Karachi, Dubai (RJ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Wings (RW)
(No flights on Saturday)
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:05Damascus (RJ)
09:45New Delhi (RJ)
10:25Beirut (RJ)
10:30Karachi, Dubai (RJ)
10:50Abu Dhabi (RJ)
11:00Colombo (RJ)
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King to op

His Majesty King Hussein is expected to reach into the Jordanian-U.S. medical mission in Amman. The King is expected to be accompanied by a large entourage. The mission is a joint effort between the Jordanian and U.S. medical communities. The King will be in Amman for a short period of time. The mission is a joint effort between the Jordanian and U.S. medical communities. The King will be in Amman for a short period of time. The mission is a joint effort between the Jordanian and U.S. medical communities. The King will be in Amman for a short period of time.

5.9% of part

The Ministry of Education, Planning and Economic Development has announced the results of the 1997 twelfth examination. The results show that 5.9% of the students passed the examination. The Ministry of Education, Planning and Economic Development has announced the results of the 1997 twelfth examination. The results show that 5.9% of the students passed the examination. The Ministry of Education, Planning and Economic Development has announced the results of the 1997 twelfth examination. The results show that 5.9% of the students passed the examination.

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The aim of the conference is to ensure that the youth of the Islamic world are properly educated and trained. The conference will be held in Amman, Jordan. The aim of the conference is to ensure that the youth of the Islamic world are properly educated and trained. The conference will be held in Amman, Jordan. The aim of the conference is to ensure that the youth of the Islamic world are properly educated and trained. The conference will be held in Amman, Jordan.

King to open medical conference

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein is today slated to open the Jordanian-U.S. medical conference at the Radisson SAS hotel.

Attendance is slated to reach into the hundreds with an estimated 250 doctors hailing from the United States.

Dr. Mohammad Nahir Abul Dahab described the meeting, to last until Aug. 1, as exemplifying close cooperation between Jordanian physicians and specialists and their American counterparts.

The meeting, organized by the Jordan Medical Association (JMA) in cooperation with the Muslim Doctors Society in North America and assorted American medical schools, is to review more than 100 reports.

These will cover internal diseases, gynaecology and obstetrics, and other topics, according to Dr. Abdul Dahab who is on the conference executive committee.

He told a press conference Friday that delegates will also attend a seminar on medical training in the United States, with American specialists outlining the nature of the courses.

The meeting will be attended by Jordanian doctors and specialists from the private and public sector as well as the Royal Medical Services of the Jordan Armed Forces.

Conference attendance is a requirement by the continued medical education course followed by the University of Illinois in the United States and is equal to 20 credit hours for attending students.

The JMA is convening an exhibition, displaying medical equipment supplied by local and foreign firms, auxiliary to the conference, Dr. Abul Dahab concluded.

45.9% of participating students pass tawjihi

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ministry of Education Friday announced the results of the 1997 tawjihi examinations, stating that 45.9 per cent of the students who took the test actually passed.

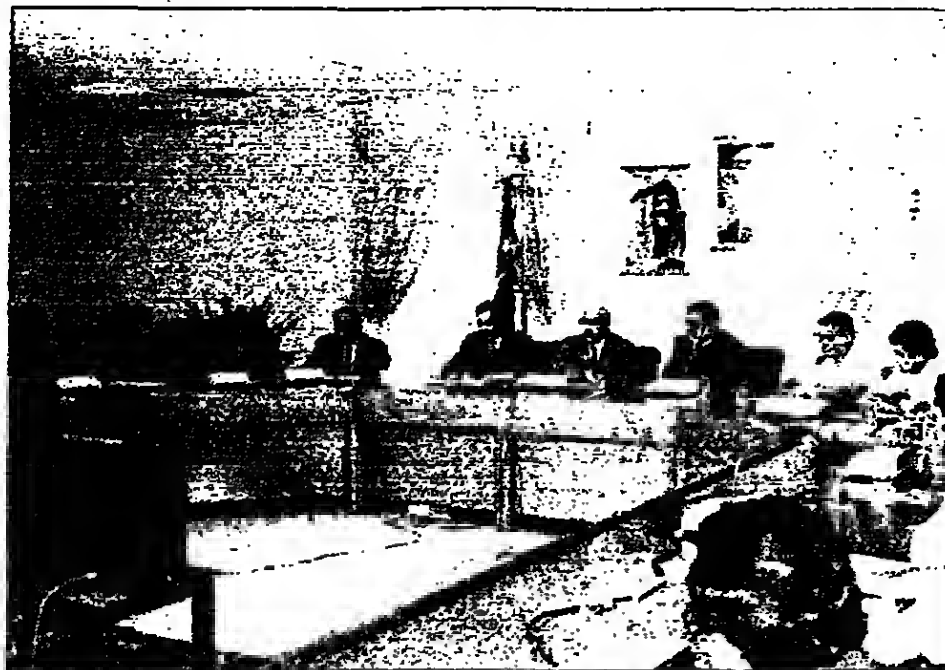
Announcing the results at a press conference in his office, Minister of Education and Higher Education Munther Masri described the total number of students who took the examination, set in accordance with a newly-introduced system, was 68,913 of whom 31,686 passed.

Last year, 46.7 per cent of those taking the test actually passed.

The following are the test results as reported by Dr. Masri:

A total of 34,131 students took the literary examination and 13,835 of these passed; 23,770 persons took the scientific exam with 13,543 passing; 966 students took the Sharia (Islamic studies) examination with 364 passing.

A total of 4,140 students took the commerce exam with 1,578 passing; 3,080 students took the industrial exam with 1,176 passing; 964 students took the nursing exam of whom 554 passed; 423 students took the hotel management exam of whom 194 passed.



Minister of Education and Higher Education Munther Masri announces results of the 1997 tawjihi exams (Petra photo)

891 took the domestic economy course of whom 270 passed, 548 students took the agricultural course and 172 passed the exam.

A total of 1,426 students took the newly-introduced vocational training examination and 342 passed.

Of this last group, according to Dr. Masri, those who passed the exam are eligible to pursue their university education in same fashion as their col-

leagues who passed the examination in other categories. Observers believe that the majority of students who did pass the exam will still be unable to attend universities in Jordan as they have failed to attain requirements set last week by the Council of Higher Education (CHE).

According to these rules, only students with minimum average grades of 80 per cent are to be admitted to scientific faculties and

only students with minimum average grades of 65 per cent will be permitted to submit applications for other faculties.

Meanwhile, the scholarship department at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education has requested that those students who passed their tawjihi exams apply for scholarships in foreign countries for the upcoming scholastic year from July 27-29.

Kingdom, Malaysia cover cultural, Islamic issues

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan and Malaysia Friday discussed cooperation in cultural and Islamic fields.

The two countries agreed to hold alternate meetings in Amman and Kuala Lumpur to discuss Islamic-related issues as well as the question of Zakat (alms) in the Islamic World.

Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdul Salam Abbadi and his Malaysian counterpart

Abdul Hamid Othman convened the meeting in the presence of officials from both countries.

They also discussed bilateral ties, cooperation in both political and economic fields, and the interchange of Islamic publications and expertise, notably in Arabic and Islamic instruction.

The issue of postgraduate student acceptance in Jordanian universities and institutes of higher educa-

tion as well as teacher and student exchange visits was also covered at the meeting.

According to the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, more than 45,000 Malaysians visited Jordan in 1996.

Earlier, the Malaysian delegation visited the King Abdullah Mosque Cultural Centre where it toured the Hashemite exhibition. The exhibit depicts various holy sites including Al

Haram Al Sharif in Jerusalem as well as Muslim holy shrines in the Kingdom.

Dr. Abbadi and the Malaysian delegation reviewed the ministry's various activities as well as the work of the Hashemite Charity Organisation which has been active in providing disaster relief to Muslim societies in need of such.

French medal conferred upon director general of Jordan Radio and Television

AMMAN (Petra) —

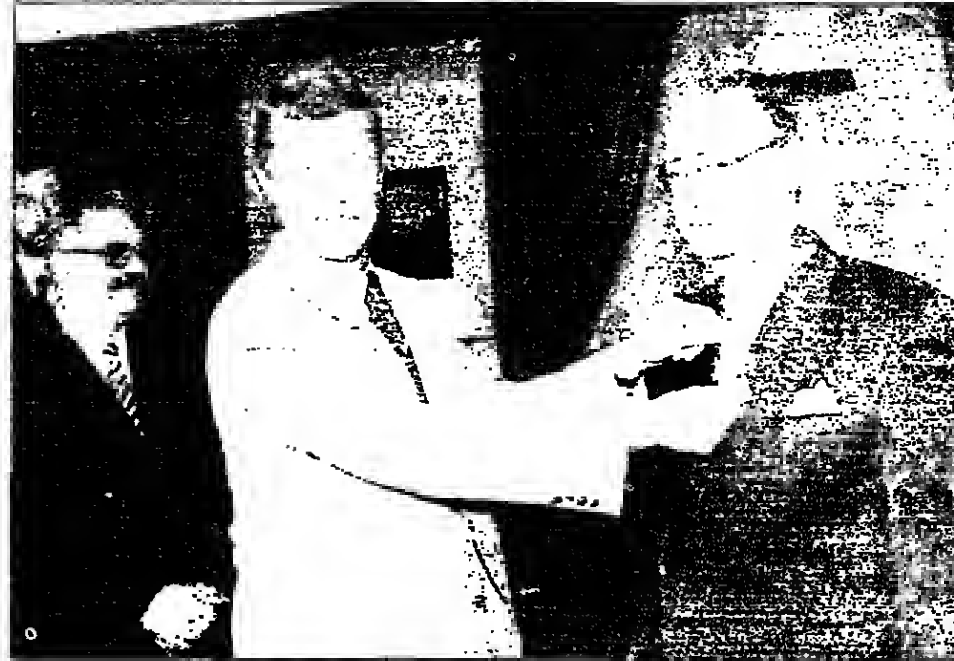
French Ambassador to Jordan Bernard Bajole Thursday stated that France and Jordan will conclude an agreement promoting cooperation between the French and Jordanian television and radio corporations in the coming week.

In a ceremony to present the distinguished French medal "Commander" to Director General of Jordan Radio and Television Ihsan Ramzi for his role in promoting cultural cooperation between France and Jordan, Mr. Bajole affirmed that French President Jacques Chirac decided last May to present the medal to Mr. Ramzi in recognition of the corporation's role in strengthening bilateral relations.

The medal is one of the highest orders in France, he added.

Mr. Ramzi contributed to the production of the first French-Arab programme to teach French in the Arab World through Jordan Television in conjunction with a French firm, Mr. Bajole recalled.

He praised the director



French Ambassador to Jordan Bernard Bajole Thursday confers the distinguished French medal "Commander" upon Director General of Jordan Radio and Television Ihsan Ramzi (Petra photo)

general for his efforts in helping to establish television stations in Qatar and Oman as well as Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates.

In reply, Mr. Ramzi thanked the French government, stressing his determination to further

strengthen bilateral ties in educational and cultural fields.

Stressing that the French honour is equally shared amongst the entire corporation staff, Mr. Ramzi suggested that France establish Amman as a cultural coop-

eration centre at the regional level.

Jordan is a member of the Euro-Arab Broadcasting Union and has been instrumental in promoting cultural exchange through media in Europe and the Arab World, he concluded.

Civil Aviation Authority undergoes restructuring

AMMAN (Petra) — The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) is currently undergoing restructuring in order to operate on a commercial basis and cater to international requirements.

CAA Director General Captain Jaser Ziyad stated Friday.

As global attention is being directed towards membership in the World Trade Organisation (WTO), it is inevitable that Jordan, which is seeking free trade, and all forms of monopoly and state privileges, Capt. Ziyad stated.

Potential WTO membership obligates Jordan to reexamine the CAA legal system and restructure the department in a manner which caters to the former's requirements and conditions, he said.

The CAA has contracted an international consultancy firm which has worked out a strategy for the restructuring process to be completed in

Jordan, Israel discuss Aqaba airport

AMMAN (AFP) — Minister of Tourism Akel Biltaji and his Israeli counterpart, Moshe Katzav, Thursday discussed plans for joint tourism promotion, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

The two ministers, who met in the Israeli Red Sea city of Eilat, discussed plans to launch joint advertising campaigns in Europe, Canada, the United States and the Middle East.

They also decided to facilitate the granting of visas to Israeli tourists wanting to visit Jordan and to Jordanians wishing to go

to Israel, Petra said.

Jordan and Israel, which signed a peace treaty in October of 1994, have a tourism cooperation agreement.

Amman decided, at the end of June, to freeze an agreement allowing Israeli civilian aircraft to use the airport in the southern Jordanian city of Aqaba because of Israeli security demands which Jordan called unacceptable.

The peace treaty had called for making Aqaba a "peace airport" to serve southern Israel and Jordan.

approximately one year, Capt. Ziyad affirmed.

It is now awaiting the government's final

approval, he added.

The most exemplary system, ensuring success, is one based on a system

of free trade and one which is not under government monopoly nor subsidy but operating on purely commercial basis.

Referring to the Aqaba airport, he confirmed that since the 1994 peace treaty, Jordan and Israel have been working towards the creation of an airport in Aqaba to serve regional air travel and transport.

Negotiations are ongoing with Israelis regarding the project and an American firm is to conduct a feasibility study pertaining thereto, he said.

There still exist some outstanding issues to be settled before the joint project can be enacted, according to Capt. Ziyad.

International flights scheduled for Eilat will be diverted to Aqaba in September, once Israel and Jordan have reached final agreement on the project, he concluded.

Islamic conference calls for action to solve youth problems

AMMAN (J.T.) — Muslim scholars on Thursday welcomed His Majesty King Hussein's call to create a child educational strategy and called on Muslim states to respond to this call and to prepare a survey on the state of youths in Islamic countries in order to draw action plans.

In a concluding session, President of the Royal Academy for Islamic Research (Al al Bayt Foundation) Nassereddin Al Assad emphasised that the conference which was held under the title: "Islam and Present Day Social Problems" focused on cooperation among Muslim scholars in order to come up with a plan to solve the problems of Muslim and Arab worlds.

The attendees highlighted the need to modernise and upgrade the regulations and laws pertaining to children.

Participants also called on the Islamic World to direct their attention to solve the problem of homeless refugees and those who lost their nationalities in accordance with the teachings of Islam, human rights and the principles of the Geneva Convention with

the aim of protecting them, caring for them and ensuring their safe-return home, particularly the Muslim refugees who constitute 70 per cent of world refugees.

The participants hoped that His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan's call for the establishment of the Global Zakat Foundation would receive a positive response from those concerned and cooperate in bringing it to light.

They also stressed the need to establish foundations that would uncover children's talents and develop them.

The participants also proposed subjects for the next session of the Royal Academy for Islamic Civilisation Research namely: "What Have We Prepared For The Next Century," "The Requirements of The Islamic World Renaissance at The Threshold of The New Century" and "We and The Media Revolution."

WHAT'S GOING ON

JERASH FESTIVAL

* Concert by Wa'el Kfouri at the South Theatre at 8:30 p.m.

* Concert by the Bafuchi Group of Chile at the North Theatre at 8:30 p.m.

* Concert by the Family International at Artemis Steps at 8:30 p.m.

* Performance by Schleswig-Holstein band of Germany at the Sound and Light Theatre at 8:30 p.m.

* Children's play "The Young Pedlar" at Grotto Theatre at 8:00 p.m.

* Musical performances by Jordanian and Italian bands and circus displays at the main square at 7:00 p.m.

* Display of handicrafts and sculptures at Zeus vault.

LECTURE

* "Khairat Iskander" by Suzanne Richard and Jesse Long at the American Center of Oriental Research (Tel. 846-117) at 7:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Paintings and ceramics sculptures by Arab artists at the Orient Gallery, Shmeisani (Tel. 681303) until July 31.

* Display of Bani Hamida hand-made products at Bani Hamida House, Jabal Amman, until July 31 (Tel. 6586967).

* Photo exhibition entitled "Jerusalem in Danger" by Khalid Al Zaghari at the Modern Educational School, Khaldi, until July 31.

* Photography exhibition by Ian Kasey, at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh, until July 29.

* Paintings by Ali Al Ghoul at Greater Amman Municipality Cultural Department, Ras Al Ain, until July 31.

Antelope smugglers arrested at border

AMMAN (J.T.) — Badia and border police units arrested persons who had been found with 12 white antelopes from the Al Shau-mari Wildlife Reserve in their possession, according to RSCN Spokesman Khal-doun Kiwan Friday.

The suspects were planning to smuggle the animals abroad, he added.

Officials returned the animals to the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) which organisation is responsible for the Kingdom's six reserves.

The suspects were accosted near Rweished, close to the Iraqi border, last Monday, Mr. Kiwan affirmed.

The thieves had originally stolen a total of 14 antelopes from the reserve and were heading towards the eastern borders when they were stopped by police close to the border region, he explained.

Two of the animals died in voyage, according to Mr. Kiwan.

He explained that the retrieved animals, one female and 11 males, are currently undergoing medical testing at the reserve's quarantine unit.

The retrieved animals will be inoculated against diseases before their release in the Shau-mari reserve, he added.

Stating appreciation for the badia and border police work, Mr. Kiwan described the animals as constituting part of the nation's natural wealth.

He issued a public appeal that persons help prevent smuggling or trading in animals which are currently in danger of extinction as well as those which are being

cared for by staff in national reserves.

The RSCN, a private, voluntary organisation, established in 1966, is dedicated to the conservation of nature and natural resources.

It cares for different types of species of animals under threat of extinction such as the Arabian Oryx, the White Antelope, the Ibex, the Mountain Gazelle and Fallow Deer at its Shau-mari, Azraq, Wadi Mujib, Zuhayra, Dana and Rum wildlife reserves.

NEWS IN BRIEF

UNRWA to fix camp infrastructures

AMMAN (Petra) — The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinians (UNRWA) has announced its intention to implement infrastructure maintenance works in refugee camps in Irbid, Wihdat, Baqaa and Zarqa.

'Family planning up to couple'

AMMAN (Petra) — Sharia Faculty Dean at the University of Jordan Mahmoud Sartawi Friday affirmed that, according to Islam, family planning is the prerogative of the couple concerned. "Islam guides people and takes economic and social conditions into consideration," he said.

Minister announces court inspections

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Justice Riyadh Shakaa Friday stated that four judges will be appointed to inspect various tribunal performances and will report their findings to the Higher Judicial Council.

Volunteer children's camps close

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Education and Higher Education Munther Masri sponsored the closing ceremony of volunteer camps convened in Dibeen, near Ajloun. The camps aim at acquainting participants with various areas of the Kingdom and fostering their loyalty and diligence to the nation, Dr. Masri stated.

Alleged Versace killer's suicide leaves many riddles

MIAMI BEACH (R) —

The suicide of Andrew Cunanan, suspected of killing fashion designer Gianni Versace and four other men, ended a nationwide manhunt and brought relief to Miami's terrified gay community.

But it left many questions about his tawdry saga unanswered.

"The big one is why? Why did Andrew Cunanan select his victims, why did he begin this rampage, why did he end it in the way he did?" asked Miami Beach Police Chief Richard Barreto.

"Unfortunately I don't know that we are ever going to know the answers," he said, speaking on CNN's Larry King Live.

Police confirmed Thursday that Cunanan himself was his final victim, ending an alleged cross-country spree of killing that began in April.

Cornered in a houseboat a few miles from the elegant oceanfront mansion where he is accused of shooting Versace on July 15, the 27-year-old fugitive put a pistol in his mouth after a caretaker stumbled upon him, and pulled the trigger.

Police stormed the dwelling and "found the body of a white male lying (sic) on a bed in the upstairs master bedroom," FBI Agent Keith Evans said in an affidavit.

"The white male was obviously deceased due to large amounts of blood seen coming from his ears,

mouth and nose and he had a semi-automatic handgun lying on his groin."

The 40-calibre pistol was the same kind as the one already linked by the FBI to the murders of Versace and two of his other four alleged victims. CNN quoted authorities as saying tests had proven the suicide weapon was the same gun.

"Everybody had his photo, everybody had his face," said FBI Agent Paul Philip, saying one of the biggest manhunt in U.S. history left Cunanan nowhere to go.

Mr. Evans said a safe found at the houseboat "may contain more evidence related to the five homicides." Police took it away along with an address book and financial records for perusal.

Cunanan, described by his own mother as a "high-class prostitute," left no suicide note that would explain why he committed his alleged crimes.

One man who might help answer some of the outstanding questions was the owner of the houseboat in Miami Beach's affluent Indian Creek neighbourhood.

The FBI had located the owner in Las Vegas, Deputy Director William Esposito told a Washington news conference.

He was being cooperative and "probably being interviewed as we speak," Mr. Esposito said. He added that he was unaware whether the owner and Cunanan had a prior relationship.

Local media have named him as Torsten Reineck, a German citizen who also owns a gay beach club in Las Vegas. German police said Thursday they believed Mr. Reineck might be a fugitive they had been seeking since 1992.

Mr. Esposito said Cunanan had contacted an unidentified associate right after Versace's murder about obtaining false identification and a passport so he could flee the United States.

Police had named Cunanan as their only suspect in the murder of Versace, countering to rock stars and royalty whose admirers worldwide were grief-stricken by his death.

Fernando Carreira, the houseboat caretaker whose telephone call led police to Cunanan, said he was glad to be alive.

"He was a dangerous man, he could shoot anyone," Mr. Carreira said on local television.

He said he thought he deserved the \$45,000 reward for information leading to Cunanan's arrest. Mr. Barreto said, however, that the tip-off had never mentioned Cunanan and that he was not sure Mr. Carreira qualified.

A local TV station asked viewers to call in and vote on whether he should get the money.

Forensic tests had not yet established whether Cunanan was HIV-positive, a factor which some criminol-

ogists have suggested might have fuelled his drive to kill.

His exact relationship to Versace is a mystery although the two, both homosexual, are reported to have met socially.

News of Cunanan's death brought relief to Miami Beach, a Mecca for tourists and for gays, who had lived in fear and anxiety while the suspected killer remained on the loose.

Miami Beach Mayor Seymour Gelber told Reuters: "We're accustomed to greeting tourists, not searching out killers ... The last 10 days have been rather dreary."

In Milan, the Versace family said they were relieved and grateful to those who helped to resolve the murder.

Attorney General Janet Reno and FBI Chief Louis Freeh said his death concluded "one of the most massive fugitive manhunt in American law enforcement history."

Cunanan was on the FBI's 10 Most Wanted List of fugitives even before the Versace slaying. He was also wanted for the murders of his friend Jeffrey Trail, 28, in late April his former lover David Madison, 33, in May Miglin, 72, and William Reese, 45.

Versace, 50, was cremated in Miami last week and the ashes placed in a vault in Italy Friday.



Technicians with the Dade County Coroner's Office wheel the body of 27-year-old Andrew Cunanan from a Miami Beach boathouse Thursday. Cunanan, wanted for the murder of fashion designer Gianni Versace and four others, was found dead of an apparent suicide, police said (Reuters photo)

Yeltsin vows to press ahead with military reforms

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin vowed Friday to push ahead with controversial reform of the Russian military, telling Russian Radio the reforms have started and will not be halted.

Speaking on Russian Radio, Mr. Yeltsin said: "The important thing now is to keep up the rhythm. We can wait no longer."

He reaffirmed his intention to cut armed forces personnel from 1.7 million to 1.2 million in two years. The half a million people, mainly officers of the former Soviet Red Army, who will leave would get social benefits, he said.

Mr. Yeltsin admitted the issue was controversial and that many people, including top military leaders, believe Russia does not have the financial means to carry out such widespread reforms.

"I know that some say starting (reform) today will lead to the destruction of the army," the Russian president said.

"I know these critics are, for the most part, concerned with the fate of the army, but those calling for reform are not less worried for the future of the armed forces."

"Of course, it would be better to be in a more appropriate financial situation. But we can wait no longer," he said.

Some of the demobilised soldiers might be taken into a vast training project, previously announced by Mr. Yeltsin, to send thousands of young Russians to train abroad.

Mr. Yeltsin also repeated his pledge to pay off the wage debt to military servicemen by Sept. 1 and added that arrears in subsidies and social payments for soldiers and their families would be settled by Jan. 1.

The Russian leader also promised to address the problem of living quarters for servicemen. In principle, each soldier has the right to an apartment, but 97,000 families are denied this right, he admitted.

Since July 16, Mr. Yeltsin has signed a series of measures to speed up reforms of the former Red Army.

He plans to streamline the armed forces by slashing the number of generals by 20 per cent, to 2,300 from the current level of 2,865.

He ordered the privatisation of 9,000 army-run shops and cafes, along with sports installations and repair services and the sale of military-owned property. Income from the sales will finance new housing projects.

U.S. labs redesign nuclear warheads

ALBUQUERQUE (R) — New Mexico's nuclear weapons laboratories are designing a possible replacement for nuclear warheads on U.S. Navy Trident submarines, the first design change since the end of the cold war, lab officials said Thursday.

Heinz Schmitt, a vice-president at Albuquerque's Sandia National Laboratories, said no decision had been made to build any newly designed warheads, but the U.S. military wanted to be prepared should the existing W88 warheads develop problems as they age.

Similar redesign efforts will be required over the next few decades for the five other nuclear weapons that will remain in the U.S. nuclear arsenal, Mr. Schmitt said.

Arms control groups said the design work undermined the 1970 Non-Proliferation Treaty signed by the United States and other nuclear powers.

A worldwide nuclear test ban in place since President Bill Clinton signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty last September also could short-circuit design efforts because test blasts would have to be conducted with the new warheads.

"The United States agreed to enter into negotiations to accomplish nuclear disarmament," said Greg Mello of the Los Alamos Study Group, a Santa Fe, New Mexico, arms control organisation that revealed details of the new design work earlier this week.

"This design work shows

a commitment to build new nuclear weapons ... and optimise the arsenal for post-cold war conditions," he said.

Mr. Schmitt countered that the work on the navy missile warhead did not constitute "new nuclear weapon."

"The pressure on this effort is to see how we can replace it and meet the same requirements," he said. "This is not an attempt to bring in a new system."

Since the end of the cold war, the United States has dismantled many of its nuclear weapons. But the military still retains a stockpile, and Congress and the White House have charged New Mexico's nuclear weapons labs with the job of ensuring it remains safe and reliable.

Yeltsin sets up working group on plutonium

MOSCOW (R) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin Thursday ordered the creation of a working group to consider what to do with surplus weapons-grade plutonium, the presidential press service said.

It said Mr. Yeltsin had issued a decree telling scientist Yevgeny Velikhov, a member of Russia's advisory Defence Council, to head the working group and prepare a report by Oct. 15.

The decree, issued by Mr. Yeltsin at the Volzhsky Utyos resort where he is on holiday in central Russia, coincides with international efforts to negotiate an end to the production of plutonium which is used to make nuclear weapons.

The United States an-

nounced plans last December for scrapping 50 tonnes of plutonium left over from its nuclear weapons programme, but a senior official said the plans hinged on talks with Russia on reducing stockpiles of the substance.

Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov said in Geneva last month that Moscow supported calls to start talks on banning production of fissionable materials for nuclear weapons.

Under Mr. Yeltsin's decree, the working group must work out a plan for what to do with surplus weapons-grade plutonium and prepare a framework inter-state agreement on the matter.

It must also draw up a declaration setting out

quantities of surplus weapons-grade plutonium in Russia and consider ways for Russia to take part in international projects on the use of plutonium, of which it gave no details.

Western governments have been worried since the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 that nuclear materials could be stolen in the former Soviet bloc and put into nuclear arms within reach of non-nuclear states.

A nuclear expert told Reuters in April the only known theft of enough weapons-grade nuclear material to make a bomb was in August 1994, when German police seized 363 grammes of plutonium-239 from couriers on a flight to Munich from Moscow.

Japanese premier resolved to boost ties with Russia

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto reiterated his resolve to boost relations with Russia Friday, a day after he proposed a new approach to improving ties long plagued by a territorial row.

"I mean to take one step forward," he told reporters.

Mr. Hashimoto Thursday proposed joint development of energy resources in the Russian far east as part of what he called Japan's new diplomatic approach to Russia, based on "three principles of trust, mutual benefit and long-term viewpoint."

The approach marked a radical change from Tokyo's long-standing policy of linking the territorial dispute over four islands to economic cooperation with

Russia.

Mr. Hashimoto was quoted as telling reporters Friday that Japan needed to have better ties with Russia, which has now become one of eight major powers after being admitted at the latest annual summit of the G7 in Denver, Colorado, as an official member.

"For Japan, not having fully normalised ties with one of the eight powers is not appropriate. Japan could be isolated if it does not make positive efforts to break through the situation," he said.

Japan has yet to conclude a peace treaty with Russia, citing the territorial dispute over the islands seized by the former Soviet Union towards the end of World

War II.

Top government spokesman Seiroku Kajiyama meanwhile told a news conference that Mr. Hashimoto's proposal showed his "considerably serious intention."

"We have learned from past experience that problems cannot be easily solved if we stick to the narrow territorial issue," the chief cabinet secretary said.

Mr. Kajiyama said the proposed joint resources development would benefit Japan as well as entire Asia as demand for energy in the region was sharply increasing.

He also expressed the hope that such cooperation would eventually lead to the solution of the territorial row.

Albanian parliament elects president, lifts curfew

TIRANA (R) — Albania's new parliament Thursday lifted a five-month curfew and elected a respected academic as the country's president in first steps to end nationwide anarchy.

Socialist Party Secretary-General Rexhep Mejdani, a former physics professor, entered politics only last year and was never a member of Albania's once all-powerful Communist Party.

He replaces Sali Berisha, who resigned Wednesday to take up a seat as an opposition deputy for his Democratic Party, which suffered a resounding defeat in June 29 elections.

Several newspapers Thursday published pictures of Mr. Mejdani, 52, standing smiling with the U.S. ambassador at Wednesday's opening of parliament.

The sole candidate, Mr. Mejdani was elected by 110 votes to three with two absentees and seven invalid ballots.

Earlier, parliament voted unanimously to lift the state of emergency imposed on March 2 with immediate effect, ending a nationwide 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew.

Deputies of parliament's new Socialist majority said the move got their government off to a good start. "We should replace the

3 dead in Albania blast

TIRANA (AFP) — Rescue workers were Friday searching rubble after an explosion rocked a residential building in the north-east of the capital, killing at least three people and injuring 10, police said.

The blast, which occurred in the morning, destroyed a three-story building. The cause of the explosion is still unknown. The injured have been taken to hospitals in Tirana.

Emergency services were called to the scene of the destruction of our institutions with the emergency of their construction," said Socialist Party leader and Prime Minister Designate Fatos Nano.

Small changes introduced by parliament's Commission on Mandates Thursday morning left the Socialists and their coalition allies with 119 seats in the 155-seat parliament, while the Democrats had 27, including Mr. Berisha.

Parliament elected Social Democratic Party leader Skender Gjinushi, whose party is the Socialists' main coalition ally, as speaker of the assembly.

Deputies from Mr. Berisha's Democratic Party continued their boycott of parliament for a second day to protest at the conduct of the June 29 elections, described by international monitors as

acceptable if far from perfect. Tirana bar owner Vladimir, 41, welcomed the lifting of the curfew. "Only the common people stayed inside their homes under the curfew while bandits, criminals and thieves had a good time working during the night," he said.

Other people were more cautious. "First they should create a government which should restore order and then the state of emergency could be easily lifted," said Suzana Gjergji, 52, from Vlore, a port in Albania's anarchic south.

Relative normality has returned to Tirana, where residents stroll tree-lined boulevards and pack cafes every evening, but the city still echoes nightly to bursts of gunfire.

In the early hours of Tuesday, an explosion blamed on

a business dispute destroyed two cafes on Tirana's main Martyrs of the Nation Boulevard. The area was virtually deserted and one man was slightly injured.

Armouries were looted at the start of the unrest and an estimated one million weapons remain in private hands.

International peacekeepers began withdrawing last week, leaving armed gangs as the only authority in many areas, particularly in the south where residents of towns like Gjirokaster and Vlore seldom venture out after midnight.

Mr. Nano, who was jailed by Mr. Berisha on corruption charges that his Socialists say were politically motivated, insists his reform party has nothing to do with the Stalinist regime of Enver Hoxha which ruled for four decades.

Apart from restoring law and order, the main task of Mr. Nano's government will be to resolve the economic chaos left by the collapse of the schemes and put the impoverished Balkan country on the road to reconstruction and modernisation.

His party campaigned in part on a promise to compensate pyramid investors who lost their life savings.

Officials say privately that discussion is focusing on Oct. 28 as a possible summit date.

A delegation of U.S. officials was in Beijing this week for working level talks on the summit and some would join Mr. Albright in Malaysia to brief her on their meetings.

One official called the Clinton-Jiang summit the "most important meeting between the two countries in a decade."

Despite a scandal in Washington on allegations of Chinese efforts to influence the 1996 U.S. election, U.S. officials are upbeat about the current process of engagement with Beijing that is intended to keep ties improving after a period of dangerous deterioration.

U.S. officials say Beijing may be more interested in the process and pomp of a summit, but the United States is pushing for concrete achievements in key areas, including human rights and non-proliferation.

China president sees further growth in U.S. ties

BEIJING (R) — China's long-troubled relations with the United States have warmed steadily in recent months and now see an opportunity for swifter improvement, China's President Jiang Zemin said.

"Despite great changes in today's international situation, the common interests between the two great countries, China and the U.S., in maintaining world peace and promoting economic growth and social progress are expanding rather than diminishing," the official People's Daily Friday quoted Mr. Jiang as telling former U.S. President Jimmy Carter.

Sino-U.S. relations had improved and expanded steadily since the start of this year, Mr. Jiang told Mr. Carter Thursday.

Mr. Jiang, who also heads the ruling Communist Party and is commander-in-chief of the military, has this year repeatedly stressed the importance of ties with United States to ensure strong momentum toward a long-awaited

summit with U.S. President Bill Clinton in October.

Mr. Jiang has been eager to pay a state visit to the United States ever since he was appointed to lead the party by late paramount leader Deng Xiaoping after the army crushed student-led demonstrations for more democracy in 1989.

Diplomats say Mr. Jiang is clearly anxious that no hiccup in relations throws the summit into doubt.

"Current bilateral ties are experiencing an important opportunity for further growth," Mr. Jiang was quoted as telling Mr. Carter in a meeting at the seaside resort of Beidaihe where China's leaders go each year to escape the sweltering summer heat in Beijing and to set policy for the next 12 months.

Mr. Jiang said he hoped China and the United States would continue to make efforts to build long-term stable and healthy ties, the People's Daily reported.

The two nations should develop ties "with an eye

to the 21st century by increasing mutual trust and strengthening cooperation," Mr. Jiang was quoted as saying.

The main reason China and the United States were able to establish ties in 1978, during Mr. Carter's presidency, was because their leaders were aware of the vital common interests between the two countries, Mr. Jiang said.

On Thursday, Mr. Carter said Beijing and Washington had lost sight of the vision that led to ties in 1978, a reference to disputes marring relations in recent years, but stressed that shared interests meant Sino-U.S. relations were as vital as ever.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was to meet Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen in Kuala Lumpur Saturday on the fringes of the Association of South East Asian Nations meeting for new talks aimed at preparing for the Sino-U.S. summit, U.S. officials said Thursday.



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A group of farmers paddle their boat as they try to reach their flooded homes in the southern village of Kosienice, Thursday. The Odra River surge, caused by last weekend's renewed rain flooded many villages again. More than 2,900 out of a total of 6,090 square kilometres lay under water, affected during the disaster (Reuters photo)

Embattled Poles reinforce dykes on swollen Odra

WARSAW (R) — New surges of high water coursed Thursday along Poland's Odra (Oder), which scoured its riverbank communities earlier this month, and officials said weakened dykes could break at any place or time.

"Along the whole Odra except the lower reaches, as the dykes are soaked and eroded, they could go anywhere at any moment," said Marek Sobczak of Poland's Flood Crisis Committee.

He said a dyke which broke Wednesday on the German side, where the river runs along the border south of Frankfurt an der Oder, starkly illustrated the dangers.

"It suddenly went and that was that," Mr. Sobczak said. Troops, firemen and volunteers waited at key points to repair any flaws in defences along the major waterway which has brought grief and death since downpours early this month unleashed the region's worst natural disaster in centuries.

The main new Odra surge, caused by last weekend's renewed rain over the country's heavily-flooded south, appeared to be slowly passing the southwestern city of Opole, where a larger swell this month submerged downtown streets.

The wave, a lesser repeat of the high water in the second week of July, was now approaching the flood-ravaged city of Wrocław on its way towards the German

border and the sea. Mr. Sobczak said Wrocław did not now risk a full return to the floods on the scale seen in the second week of July, when citizens managed to defend the historic centre but much of the city of 650,000 was submerged under more than a metre.

But the residential area of Zaciszewo already lay under water Thursday as workers rushed to repair a crucial sluice to prevent graver flooding when the new surge struck.

The Odra was far from the only source of danger and suffering — other smaller rivers were also inflicting local tragedies in south and west Poland where expanses of land were still submerged, delaying clean-up and reconstruction efforts.

On Thursday, 2,900 square kilometres lay under water out of a total 6,090 square kilometres affected during the disaster. It covered parts of 440 towns and villages, 59 of which were completely flooded.

The total death toll held steady at 55, although there was a likelihood that receding waters could throw up more victims.

Camera images from flooded areas showed people taking boats to feed stranded surviving farm animals, wearing masks to bury heaps of bloated pig carcasses or sitting hopelessly on smashed furniture that represented the lost efforts of a

lifetime. In Rybnik in Silesia, troops were gathering corpses washed out of a ravaged cemetery for reburial in a mass grave.

Where waters receded, sewage laden filth and a lack of clean drinking water threatened dysentery and food-poisoning.

Despite such horrors, weather forecasts gave grounds to hope the nearly three-week ordeal was approaching an end.

Mr. Sobczak said that although rain was falling on parts of Poland and was likely over the weekend, it would probably be scattered and not dangerous.

As the government rolled into action with a major reconstruction plan, the billions of dollars worth of damage raised anxieties over effects on Poland's finances.

The zloty currency slipped in Thursday trading and the Central Bank had to sell dollars to prop it up against what dealers said was speculative selling by Polish banks.

The opposition and the co-ruling Polish Peasant Party kept up calls for Sept. 21 general elections to be postponed, saying flooded areas were in no state to hold them.

But the ex-Communist Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), dominant party in the ruling coalition, opposed the idea and appeared able to block any delay in the polls with support from its ally

President Kwasniewski.

As for Frankfurt an der Oder, soldiers started evacuating thousands of people from their homes Friday after a second dyke burst overnight in the flood-hit Oder River area of eastern Germany.

Officials said about 3,000 people in the villages of Ziltendorf and Wiesenau would have to leave as a result of the breach, south of another dyke which burst Wednesday.

Further north in the Oderbruch area, fire sirens and church bells were sounded and local television broadcast messages warning residents in around 15 villages to prepare for evacuation after the foundations of a dyke were swept away by the river.

A spokesman for the regional authorities said evacuations were progressing slowly as some residents were reluctant to follow orders and leave their homes.

The new breach was now 75 metres wide and would probably open up to 200 metres as water rushed through, he said.

Water levels dropped further downstream at Frankfurt an der Oder after the breach relieved pressure.

But the situation was still critical in Ratzdorf, at the confluence of the Oder and Neisse rivers which form part of the border with Poland, the spokesman said.

Foreign aid workers quit Kabul as Taliban leader said to escape

KABUL (AFP) — A convoy of 45 foreign aid workers left here Friday amid tensions in the city, as a senior Taliban leader thought to be held prisoner for 10 weeks was said by official radio to be free.

Former Foreign Minister Mullah Mohammad Ghaus was thought to have been held by forces opposed to the Islamic hardline militia. But an announcement by Taliban-run Radio Shariat said: "Thanks to the cooperation of the faithful people of the north Mullah Mohammad Ghaus, a member of the High Council of the Islamic movement was safely taken from Balkh to Kunduz."

At dawn Friday meanwhile about 45 expatriates left Kabul for the Pakistani border overland in a convoy of vehicles under escort of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Neither the Red Cross nor the United Nations has yet ordered an evacuation of their foreign nationals from the beleaguered Afghan capital, with opposition forces reported to be only about 25

kilometres north of the city.

On Wednesday there was a partial evacuation of foreign humanitarian aid workers when around 20 "non-essential" staff drove to Pakistan.

The news of Mr. Ghaus re-joining Islamic militia fighters in northern Kunduz came as a surprise as it contradicted earlier reports that he had been arrested by opposition troops amid fighting between the militia and anti-Taliban alliance forces in northern Mazar-i-Sharif in May.

How Mr. Ghaus was "safely taken" on the 170-kilometre journey from opposition-held Balkh province across the frontlines to neighbouring Taliban-controlled Kunduz province was unexplained.

Mr. Ghaus was reported arrested after the abortive defection by ethnic Uzbek General Abdul Malik in May.

Gen. Malik mutinied against his own warlord boss General Abdul Rashid Dostam to allow the Taliban into northern Afghanistan unopposed, but in a dis-

pute over power-sharing switched sides again to re-join the alliance.

Mr. Ghaus, Central Bank Governor Ehsanullah and chief military Commander Mullah Abdul Razaq were among an estimated 2,000 Taliban taken prisoner in the subsequent fighting.

The Taliban have been persistent in their demands for the release of these northern-held prisoners — and the success of peace negotiations hinges on the issue.

Mullah Mohammad Omar, the supreme leader of the Taliban movement, has been quoted in the Pakistan press as saying "there can be no talks or a ceasefire" with the opposition until "our men are freed."

Meaningful Afghan peace talks were put on the back burner a week ago when opposition Commander Ahmad Shah Masood launched a lightning offensive against the Muslim militants and drove them back 40 kilometres.

There was no overnight change reported in the current frontlines Friday, which are close to the vil-

lage Hossein Kot about 25 kilometres north of Kabul on the so-called old road.

The city was tense but calm Friday morning with no jet strikes or rocket attacks.

On Thursday in a daring daylight raid an opposition jet made a direct bomb hit on an important downtown Taliban billet, the former Hotel Ariana.

The foreign aid community has reacted to the escalation of fighting and uncertain security in Kabul by ordering an evacuation of all staff except those engaged in the medical and health sectors.

"It has been decided that all non-medical staff are strongly recommended to leave Kabul Friday," declared Ross Everson, Kabul chief of the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR).

Due to vulnerability of Kabul Airport to incoming rocket fire all ICRC and U.N. flights have been suspended, but Taliban air-force jets were still active, witnesses said.

Irish president retires in September to take up U.N. post

UNITED NATIONS (R) — Ireland's President Mary Robinson announced Thursday she would step down as head of state on Sept. 12, nearly three months before the end of her term, to take up her new post as the top U.N. human rights official.

"I will retire from the presidency of Ireland on September 12 at 1 p.m.," she told reporters, with Secretary-General Kofi Annan standing beside her.

Mrs. Robinson was approved by the U.N. General Assembly on June 17 as the next U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights. But the date for the start of her four-year term in the Geneva-based post was left open.

Mr. Annan has been anxious for her to take over before the beginning of the annual General Assembly session opening on Sept. 16.

Mrs. Robinson, 53, is a lawyer and human rights legal expert, as well as the first woman elected president of Ireland. Her seven-year term as head of state would normally end on Dec. 2.

"I have understood from the secretary-general that he has been very anxious to have me on board and to know the date when I would assume the post of high commissioner," she said.

"And I have indicated to him that I will retire from the presidency of Ireland on 12th of December, at 1 p.m. And I will then be in a position to take up the post," she said, mistaking the month.

After Mr. Annan whispered in her left ear, she quickly corrected herself, saying: "12th of September, at 1 o'clock. And I would hope then to go to Geneva and then to come to New York in time for the General Assembly's 52nd session," she added.

In introducing Mrs. Robinson, Mr. Annan said: "We are excited to have her on board. We think she is going to be a wonderful addition to the team. I was going to use the word 'superstar' but I didn't want to embarrass her."

Mrs. Robinson thanked Mr. Annan and said she was honoured to have been nominated by him and approved by the General Assembly.

She said it was a daunting task but a very important one.

Ex-warlord Taylor is Liberia's new president

MONROVIA (R) — Former warlord Charles Taylor won a landslide victory in Liberia's presidential election, according to results announced Thursday, achieving through the ballot box what he failed to get through the barrel of a gun.

Thousands of Liberians thronged the streets and cheered as Election Commission Chairman Henry Andrews announced that Mr. Taylor, who launched Liberia's civil war in 1989, had won Saturday's election with 75.3 per cent of the vote.

Mr. Taylor, 49, wearing his trademark cream safari suit and smiling broadly, was in the ball to hear the news.

Former senior U.N. official Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was runner-up with just under 9.6 per cent. Mr. Andrews told a packed hall in Monrovia, capital of the West African republic founded by freed American slaves in 1847.

Twelve candidates took part. Mr. Andrews said results of parallel polling for a 26-member senate and a 64-seat house of representatives would be announced in a few days. Turnout approached 90 per cent.

Defeated candidates con-

sidered over to congratulate Mr. Taylor but neither Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf nor Mr. Taylor's fellow former warlord Alhaji Kromah attended the ceremony. The third former warlord in the field, George Boley, was present.

Liberia, Africa's first independent republic, celebrates its 150th birthday Saturday.

The elections were the climax of a peace process brokered by its west African neighbours to end a war that has killed well over 150,000 people.

Before the formal announcement of the outcome, widely expected given the pattern of previous results, Mr. Taylor extended an olive branch to his rivals.

He told BBC Radio he was ready to offer jobs to some of them but he specifically mentioned Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf, 58, the only woman in the race for the presidency.

"I will offer some of them senior positions and others junior positions. We must go together," Mr. Taylor said. "I intend to use the talents of most of the fellows that I have respect for, including Ellen."

Four rival candidates earlier conceded defeat.

Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf, Mr. Kromah and Mr. Boley alleged polling day irregularities. None has rejected the election, declared free and fair by more than 500 international observers and over 1,000 local monitors.

Mr. Andrews appealed for respect for the result.

"Liberia is bigger, greater and grander than all of us," he said. "If we truly love our country ... we will at this moment take a cue from the ordinary man in the street."

A Nigerian-led West African peacekeeping force disarmed many of the nation's militia fighters and ensured security during polling. Mr. Taylor has said he would like to stay on for 12 to 18 months.

Nigeria's Foreign Minister Tom Ikimi and the commander of the peacekeepers, General Victor Malu, attended the announcement. A brass band from the armed forces of Liberia, the former national army that became just another militia, played.

The war wrecked Liberia's iron ore, rubber, timber and diamond-based economy. It drove as many as half the pre-war population of 2.5 million people from their homes.

Opposition stronghold held by Cambodian forces

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — Forces loyal to Cambodia's strongarm leader Hun Sen were Friday firmly in control of a key northern town which had been the stronghold of rival royalist forces, officials and witnesses said.

The town of Samrong has been the object of intense speculation and conflicting reports for the past few days as each side in the factional conflict has claimed the dusty hamlet was in their hands. Adding to the confusion, the town, about 25 kilometres south of the Thai border, has changed hands between the opposing troops "at least" three times in the past week, military analysts who were in the area said.

"We are in control of Samrong and there is no fighting near the town," Secretary of State for Information Khieu Kanharith told AFP. "There has been no change in recent days and our outposts are five kilometres north of the town," he said.

An independent source just returned from the area said that as of late Thursday, Mr. Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party (CPP) forces were firmly entrenched in Samrong.

"Hun Sen's men were very much present in the town and seemed to be in control in the area by a long way," a traveller who visited the area said.

"It has changed hands several times, but for the past few days the CPP,

which as by far the stronger force, have been holding Samrong."

The latest remarks came just hours after Nhek Bun Chhay, the deputy chief of staff of ousted First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh reemerged from hiding, defiant about the prospects for the royalist resistance.

The former top soldier claimed in a town on the border with Thailand that royalist forces were in control of Samrong and that the "resistance" would use it as "a base to counter-attack." Prince Ranariddh's royalist forces retreated more than 60 kilometres from the northern town of Siem Reap to Samrong earlier this month, offering little real resistance to the advancing CPP troops.

The outnumbered and outgunned forces of the vanquished prince did not appear to have the will to fight following the ouster of the first premier in a weekend of factional fighting in Phnom Penh on July 5 and 6, observers have said.

Mr. Khieu Kanharith also clarified remarks he made late Thursday, when he said Gen. Nhek Bun Chhay was in or near Phnom Penh and negotiating by telephone to go into exile while declaring his "retirement" from fighting and politics.

"There was some confusion about the phone calls and it was mistakenly believed Nhek Bun Chhay was speaking from here," he

said. "What is certain is that he has lied about wanting to give up fighting. I just don't want to see any more conflict," he added.

Gen. Nhek Bun Chhay, a loyal supporter of Prince Ranariddh, escaped from Phnom Penh after the earlier factional violence and had been in hiding until his reappearance Friday.

Meanwhile, U.S. envoy to Cambodia Stephen Solarz said Friday Washington wanted exiled Cambodians to be free to go home to take part in elections but strongman Hun Sen said ousted Prince Ranariddh must face trial if he returns.

Mr. Solarz said more than three hours of talks with Mr. Hun Sen Friday had been frank. But he declined to answer reporters' questions, saying he had to report to U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in Kuala Lumpur first.

"I've just had a very frank and in some respects very constructive discussion with the second prime minister," Mr. Solarz said in a brief statement.

"The United States very much wants the situation to be resolved in a manner which is compatible with the principles of the Paris peace accords, which would make it possible for those in exile to return and which would pave the road for genuinely free and fair elections," he said.

In his talks with Mr. Solarz, Mr. Hun Sen repeat-

ed that Prince Ranariddh could return but he must face trial for his alleged crimes if he came back, a Hun Sen aide said.

"He agrees to Ranariddh's returning. He just said Ranariddh has to deal with the courts," Mr. Hun Sen's aide Prak Sokhonn told reporters. "If he is found not guilty he would be allowed to sit and work with him (Mr. Hun Sen) again."

Mr. Prak Sokhonn said Mr. Solarz and Mr. Hun Sen had agreed that exiled politicians should be able to return, that Cambodia's next elections should be held on May 23 as planned and the poll should be free and fair.

Mr. Solarz, in an apparent reference to proposed mediation efforts by the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), said he hoped other parties could get involved in dialogue on Cambodia.

"I hope the constructive dialogue and discussion that I had with the second prime minister can be extended to include all of the relevant and interested parties," Mr. Solarz said.

Mr. Hun Sen has said he wants Foreign Minister Ung Huot to replace Prince Ranariddh.

On Friday, Mr. Solarz indicated the United States might support a replacement for Prince Ranariddh if the new first prime minister was chosen in an appropriate manner by the National Assembly, Mr. Prak Sokhonn said.

South Korean by-election augurs well for ruling party

SEOUL (R) — South Korean voters banded a thumping victory to the ruling party in a parliamentary by-election which analysts Friday described as a warning to the opposition ahead of presidential polls.

Thursday's election in the central town of Yesan, a stronghold of opposition presidential candidate Kim Jong-Pil, resulted in defeat for a candidate backed by the two opposition parties and was seen as a blow to the opposition's strategy of fielding a single candidate in December's presidential vote.

"The outcome is a blow to an opposition plan to cooperate in the presidential election," said the leading daily Dong-A Ilbo.

The Central Election Management Committee announced Friday that candidate Oh Jang-Sup of the ruling New Korea Party won a parliamentary seat with 26,608 votes against 23,312 for Cho Jong-Souk of Kim Jong-Pil's United Liberal Democrats.

To demonstrate the opposition's alliance, the largest opposition party, the National Congress for New Politics, did not field a candidate in Yesan and cam-

paigned for Mr. Cho.

"This highlights the weakness of the two opposition parties' alliance against the ruling party," said Choi Jang-Jip, political science professor at Korea University.

The two opposition parties have been negotiating in recent months to field a single candidate to improve their chances in December, although both Kim Jong-Pil and Kim Dae-Jung, National Congress leader, have been nominated as their torchbearers.

The Yesan poll was also the first chance for voters to pass judgement on the ruling party's choice Monday of ex-Supreme Court Judge Lee Hoi-Chang as its presidential candidate.

Mr. Lee led the ruling party's campaign in Yesan, pointing out that he is from the central Chungcheong province surrounding the town. Home-town loyalties and parochialism play decisive roles in South Korean elections.

"This is a turning point for Lee Hoi-Chang to win in a stronghold for the United Liberal Democrats," said Moon Chung-In, who lectures on politics at Yonsei University in Seoul.

"The ruling party's victory shows Lee now has the support of the region," he said.

Mr. Cho had won in the same constituency in general elections last year but the election committee ordered a fresh poll after his campaign manager was jailed for election law violations.

In another by-election Thursday, independent Park Tae-Joon, a former ruling party elder, won the vacant National Assembly seat representing the industrial town of Pohang.

The victory for Mr. Park, who quit the ruling party over policy differences with President Kim Young-Sam, was widely expected, but it again underscored the weakness of the opposition.

Mr. Park ran against Lee Ki-Tack, a former leader of the main opposition who now heads a splinter grouping, the Democratic Party. Mr. Park captured 77,884 votes against Mr. Lee's 35,137, while political novice Lee Byung-Suk, who ran for the ruling party, got 17,801 votes.

Political analysts noted that no opposition party candidate has ever won a presidential race.

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Jordanian Perspective

By Dr. Musa Kellani

A just and durable peace will not be reached as long as the right wing remains at the helm of Israeli politics

LET US make no mistake about it: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's sudden desire for a summit meeting with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat does not stem from a genuine intention to break the logjam in the peace process but is the key move to dilute the Arab opposition to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) economic conference. It is highly possible that the sought-after meeting with Arafat could take place and Netanyahu could make some dramatic gesture to instil a feeling that everything is back to normal in the peace process. This would definitely mean an additional tool of pressure in the U.S. hands to convince those Arab states which are threatening to boycott the MENA conference in Doha to relent and actually take part in the meeting.

What happens at the Doha meeting is anyone's guess: Israelis will attend the meeting with a business-as-usual approach and gain another foothold in the Arab World without their government having made any realistic move to meet the Palestinian demands. It is quite clear that any such realistic move could be promised by Netanyahu during the meeting he is seeking with Arafat. But he would be making those promises with no real desire to fulfill them, and even if the Arabs and Palestinians pushed hard, it is only logical that a physical move on the ground could not be expected before the Doha conference in November. And what incentive does Netanyahu have to live up to his

commitment after the Doha meeting after the event?

Arafat and the rest of the Arab World would only be fools to fall into the trap Netanyahu is very carefully baiting.

On the other hand, what options do we Arabs have, at this point in time, to revive the peace process with a genuine move towards settling the Israeli-Palestinian problem and the broader Arab-Israeli conflict?

Well, that is where the stepped up efforts of Jordan and the Israeli Labour Party come into play. The recent visits to Jordan of Labour leader Ehud Barak and Labour strongman Eitan Hammer are part of a Jordanian-American-Labour effort to break the impasse in the peace process. While we do not ignore the political priorities of the Labour Party, we also sense a genuine desire on the part of a majority of Labour leaders to resolve the problem with the Palestinians.

But do these Labour leaders wield enough clout to really make a difference in the Israeli approach?

We do know that at least half the Israeli population is interested in seeing a genuine settlement with the Palestinians, and a good part of them in favour of meeting some of the key demands of the Palestinians, one way or another. Can the Labour leaders take advantage of this sentiment?

We know that Eitan Hammer is not a newcomer to Israeli

politics; he not only wields strong influence among Labour voters but also enjoys the respect of many Israeli right-wingers. But it is not clear yet where he fits into the present picture.

Regardless of the failure or success of the ongoing efforts to revive the peace process, it is clear that a just, durable, comprehensive and acceptable peace settlement will not be reached as long as the right wing remains at the helm of Israeli politics.

There are many suppositions, of course, starting with Netanyahu turning to a "national unity government" with a strong Labour input that could advance the peace process. But the Labour infighting — mainly because many would not like to see Shimon Peres return to active politics, as the case would be if the party were to become a coalition partner with Likud — preempts that supposition. Perhaps that is where Labour leaders like Hammer have a major role to play.

If that does not happen, then we have no choice but to wait for new Israeli elections which will, hopefully, produce a completely new generation of leaders who are more conducive to accepting the requirements of peace.

In the meantime, it will be naive on the part of Arafat or any other Palestinian or Arab leader to accept as genuine Netanyahu's intentions.

Israelis at it again

THE ISRAELI Knesset Wednesday voted to block a future withdrawal from the Syrian Golan Heights. The following day the mayor of Jerusalem announced a plan to build a new Jewish settlement in the Arah neighbourhood of Ras Al Amoud. These moves made the Syrians and Palestinians, in particular, and the whole Arab World furious. Damascus wasted no time in viewing the Golan hill as proof that the Israelis did not want peace with the Arabs, while Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's advisor Ahmad Tihi called the new settlement plan "a declaration of war." In fact neither the Syrian warnings nor Dr. Tihi's words should be taken lightly.

The two Israeli decisions, even if they are veiled in the form of stated intentions, come at a time when the peace process is already reeling from the blow it has received when Israel decided to build a Jewish settlement on Jahal Ahu Ghneim in Arah east Jerusalem.

Looking at them we cannot help but ask: Does Israel want just peace in the Middle East or just a peace at the cost of Arah land and integrity? The current Israeli policies leave no room for doubt that the present Israeli ruling class does not want peace with the Arabs. For peace cannot be dictated by the whims of one side over the other, or by creating new realities on the ground and shoving them down the throat of the people who are hurting most under the current circumstances. With such dangerous provocations, Israel is destroying every hope of bringing to an end the decades of conflict between the Arabs and the Israelis.

Furthermore, by pushing the Palestinians into a corner, Israel can only aggravate the situation, most probably leading to another violent outburst which in turn could cause a major new conflict in the region.

The time has come for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, his government and coalition partners to realise that the cost of a fresh conflagration will be too high, not just for the Arabs but most certainly also for Israel itself.

Even if Israel is capable of winning a future war with its neighbours, the Israeli people will be the ultimate loser, for peace is the only guarantee of survival for any and all states in the area.

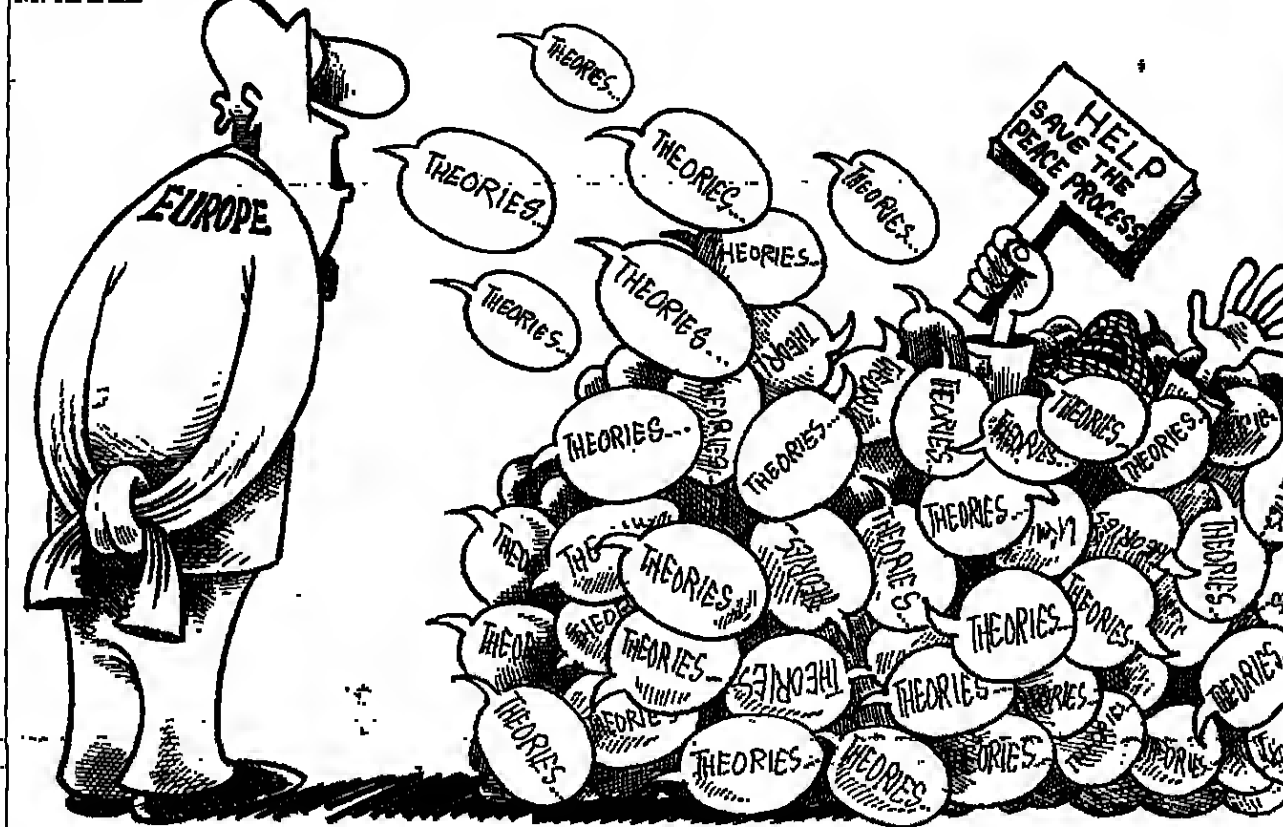
The government of Israel should decide once and for all whether it wants peace, tranquillity and prosperity for itself and its neighbours or strife, violence and perpetual conflict with them.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Dustour daily criticised the professional unions for rushing to declare their boycott of the 1997 general elections, saying that the announcement is bound to rekindle accusations against the unions for politicising their profession. Orib Rintawi said that the professional unions should have left this matter to the political parties or should at least have waited for the Muslim Brotherhood's final word because the Brotherhood, which had declared its decision to boycott elections, could change its stand between now and the elections date in November. The writer said that professional unions can by no means act for the political parties or show that they are the true political leaders of the masses. Such behaviour has, in the past, brought about differences between them and the previous governments which had repeatedly urged the professional unions to strictly adhere to the improvement of their professions rather than busy themselves with politics. Noting that the professional unions have called on the public to refrain from voting in the coming elections, the writer said that no one can stop the electorate from exercising their constitutional rights.

MAHMOUD JBOUR, a writer for Al Ra'i, called on Syria and Jordan to patch up any lingering differences and take steps to ensure continued brotherly relations between them. The much talked about Arab common market can by no means be realised unless the Arab states are ready to cooperate closely and genuinely in order to ensure economic benefits for their peoples, said the writer. It is not logical at all to see Syria and Jordan, two close neighbours within the Arab World, not complying with the requirements of the proposed common market and not taking steps to achieve that goal and, instead, seeking markets and economic agreement elsewhere, with other nations in remote corners of the world. If there are sensitive political issues between the two sides, they should be promptly overcome by all means so that economic cooperation between the Arab people within the Arab World can proceed unhindered and the aspired common market be realised.

M. KAHIL



Jordanians apparently 'losing interest in who represents them in parliament'

REVIEWED BY
ELIA NASRALLAH

THE ARABIC dailies last week again focused their attention on the Islamists' decision to boycott the 1997 general elections, tackled other domestic issues, the Palestine question and pan-Arab affairs.

Taher Adwan, a writer for Al Arab Al Yawm, referred to the Islamic Action Front's decision to follow the example of the Muslim Brotherhood and boycott the elections and warned the government that it has to take the necessary, courageous steps to help protect the process of democracy.

The writer said that should other parties decide to boycott the elections, the government will find itself forced to deal with a wall of opposition from the masses. The government should first admit that a crisis does exist and then try to address the situation, he demanded.

The writer also said that the boycott decision was taken without due consideration to the democratic process and urged the Islamists to reconsider their stand, saying that Jordanians need to see political pluralism and the process of democracy continually progressing for the benefit of the future generations.

In the view of Mahmoud Rimawi, a writer for Al Ra'i daily, the majority of the Jordanian people seems to have lost interest in who represents them in parliament and are turning their attention more and more to the problems they face in their daily life.

The writer said it is regrettable to see this happen because parliamentary life represents the country's democracy which is needed to address the economic, social and political problems the Jordanians face.

The public, he said, is turning its back on politics and

from involvement in political parties because of the prevailing economic situation and of their frustration with previous parliaments that failed to address basic and chronic issues like poverty and unemployment.

The writer said that shying away from elections means that people will not elect their representatives to demand solutions to their economic and social problems.

A writer for Al Ra'i criticised columnists who have been blaming the Muslim Brotherhood for their decision to boycott the coming parliamentary elections.

Zuhair Abul Ragheb said that the Muslim Brotherhood had to take the boycott decision not because its members are in disarray, as columnists claim, but rather as a natural reaction to the deteriorating economic and social situation and the retreat of democracy.

THE WEEK IN PERSPECTIVE

Noting that he has followed the Muslim Brotherhood's activities for years, the writer said that the group adheres to principles, has its ideology connected to faith and is ready to sacrifice everything in order to live up to its mission.

He said that the Muslim Brotherhood members do not seek temporal power but aim to bring about reform and address many ills facing the nation.

A writer for Al Arab Al Yawm said in an open letter to Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali that the government should not delay moves to deal with the consequences of Jordanians' announcing their boycott of the general elections.

We must not deceive ourselves and must declare the truth about the situation, which is that the majority of Jordanians are rejoicing over the boycott of the elections,

said Mohammad Subeithi.

The writer said that if the circle widens and if the majority of people decide to boycott the elections, there will be a real democracy crisis in the country.

The government can gain nothing by issuing a statement accusing the Muslim Brotherhood of trying to cover up for its internal differences and divisions with the announcement that it will boycott elections, warned the writer.

He added that the government, which is primarily responsible for ensuring democracy and public freedoms, should open a dialogue with the opposition as soon as possible in a bid to deal with this serious situation.

Fahed Faneek, a writer for Al Ra'i, said that since there is no demand for an extraordinary parliamentary session in the summer recess, the

government should feel free to dissolve parliament and pave the way for the coming elections.

The writer said that it is the government's prerogative to take this decision and there is no need to wait for the end of the present parliament's mandate, which ends in November.

Noting that the governments of Britain and France decided to hold elections way before they were due, the writer said following these countries' example will not be an anti-democratic move.

He said that there is no need, under the present situation, for the deputies to continue receiving salaries since they do not work.

Jorahim Ahsli, a writer for Al Ra'i, said that it is pointless for the Arab countries to continue their attack on the Netanyahu government since these governments realise too well that the ruling party in

Israel is determined to carry out its own programmes.

It should be emphasised that the Likud-led government does not respect the U.N. Security Council resolutions nor does it have any regard for the European Union's declarations in support of the Palestinian rights, said the writer.

What is needed on the Arab side is not merely venting anger through the media but rather joint and serious action on the economic and political fronts, he demanded.

The writer said that the Arabs have only one alternative: to join forces at all levels and rise up together in the face of the Zionist danger; they should realise that without a state for Palestinians there can be no Arab-Israeli peace.

A writer for Al Dustour discussed the question of corruption in Palestine, as was revealed by a special commission appointed by the Palestine leader Yasser Arafat to investigate repeated complaints of misconduct and abuse of authority.

Orib Rintawi said that the ball is now in Mr. Arafat's court and the masses are awaiting some kind of action to deal with the rampant corruption that has shocked the Palestinian people.

So much depends now on Mr. Arafat's response, because the Palestinians want to see some action and the donor nations must be satisfied that no more of their financial and economic aid will be mishandled, said the writer.

He said that in their struggle against the Israeli practices, the Palestinians need to be alert and need to continue receiving economic aid which must be handled by honest civil servants who want to serve their countrymen.

LETTERS

Appreciating individuality

To the Editor:

HAVING READ Rami G. Khouri's eloquent and thought-provoking article on the intellectual debate centring around orientalism and the so-called clash of civilisations, "Disneyland, politics, religion and clarity in cultural encounters" (Jordan Times, July 22, 1997), I would say that in discussing orientalism and cultural critique it is necessary, I believe, to mention the brilliant and formidable intellectual Edward Said. For it was Said who practically invented the word "orientalism" with his powerful discussions of how the West views Eastern cultures in his books "Orientalism", "Culture and Imperialism" and "Covering Islam".

Said argues that the way the Western world views the "Oriental" or the non-Western is shaped by distorted facts and misconceptions. His work has led to immense debate on the projection of culture and identity in media and in literature. Intellectuals like Edward Said make us stop and think about the world around us and about who we are, or ask questions like: How do we see ourselves and how does the Western world see us? What are the parameters that define our identity? Is it religion, ethnicity, media or upbringing? These questions now constitute the core of intellectual inquiry.

In a class I took at Cornell University, for example, a substantial amount of time was dedicated to this precise discussion of culture and identity. The debate this discussion generated in class was enormous. Can one be "American" in China? Are Muslim Indians' identity and behaviour defined by their Islam, by their "Indianism" or by the music they listen to? Is the scholar Samuel P. Huntington right when he ascertains that wars are "civilisational" (i.e. caused by religion and ethnicity)? The questions went on and on. Naturally, our discussions at Cornell did not resolve the universal problems of cultural conflict but they were amusing and educating.

But it is beyond universities, books and the academics where we really see cultural migraine striking. Cultural conflict is all around us. Take Amman for example: in downtown Amman, one hears the music of Umm Kalthoum and Fairouz. Their sounds echo through the seven hills of Amman, challenging the quasi-Westernism that characterises West Amman. In Abdoun, one can hear Celine Dion and Take That. West Amman is fraught with a culture that differs dramatically from that of East Amman.

What we have in Amman is a cultural conflict whereby there are competing visions or ways of life that somehow contradict each other. In my opinion, the easiest way to reconcile these conflicts is an appreciation of the individuality of each person — an extension of the fact that no two human beings are alike.

Marwan Hozaima,
Cornell University,
U.S.

Thank you for your honesty

To the Editor:

IN THE evening of July 5, very tired from a long flight from California, we flew into Amman, meaning to continue our way to Aqaba. There were no seats available on the aeroplane leaving for Aqaba that evening so a man, Imran Al Jayeh arranged for two taxis to drive us all the way down to the port city. The drivers had put in a full day and yet were willing to drive us. They were both very respectful and concerned for my family of six and all our luggage.

In all of the excitement of reaching our final destination and the fact that we had been awake for over 20 hours, I absent-mindedly forgot my purse on the back seat of the taxi. Although our driver, Hasan Mohammad Rababeh, had proved to be very kind and helpful in unloading our bags, and a wonderful driver, I thought I would never see my bag again. It was full of very important things, money, credit cards, pictures.

The next morning I expressed my concern to a friend, Haroun Al Khatib, owner of Luna Souvenir Shop in downtown Aqaba. He gave me such hope; he said he would find my purse no matter what. He telephoned many places until he was able to track down my taxi driver. When told about the bag, he went out to his taxi and found it where I had left it. The driver promised he would pack it and send it down to Aqaba for me. To my surprise, it arrived at my friend's shop that very afternoon.

I am thankful and want to commend my taxi driver and his manager, Mohammad Assaf Al Rakkad, for doing such a good job at relaying the wonderful values of your country and for their honesty and helpfulness. I also want to thank my good friend from Aqaba for going to such trouble to track down my purse.

I am very impressed at how swiftly my belongings were returned, with nothing missing. All the people involved are truly wonderful, honest and gracious representatives of the Kingdom of Jordan and worthy of praise.

Elizabeth K. Brucks,
U.S.



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Nabulsi: Jordan now focusing on social dimension adversely affected by restructuring policy

AMMAN (Petra) — Mohammad Said Nabulsi, the former governor of the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ), said in a lecture to the Amman Rotary Club that the economic restructuring programme agreed between Jordan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has achieved good and positive results for the Kingdom.

But he indicated that this programme has left a trail of adverse economic and social consequences which the government is now trying to address through policies mainly focusing on the social dimension like combating poverty and unemployment.

Dr. Nabulsi said the restructuring programme succeeded in helping Jordan achieve good progress, especially in reducing the deficit in the fiscal budget from 20 per cent at the start of the

programme to five per cent at present.

This programme, he added, has also succeeded in addressing the Kingdom's balance of payments by reducing the deficit from 17 per cent to less than four per cent, cutting inflation from 20 per cent to four per cent and lowering the Kingdom's foreign debts from \$8.5 billion in 1989 to \$6.5 billion at present noting that the government is still doing its best to reduce the debts.

Jordan has been able through the restructuring programme to rebuild its foreign currency reserves, which have now topped the billion dollar mark and to keep steady the exchange rate of the Jordanian dinar, Dr. Nabulsi added.

But he said that despite the successes, the Jordanians now complain of recession in addition to increasing rates of poverty, something which the government has to exert strenuous pressures to address, noting that the government has adopted the social security package plan to help deal with the situation.

Dr. Nabulsi called on the government to give due attention to the Iraqi market, especially now that Iraq's other neighbours are opening their borders with Iraq. He also urged the government to pave the ground for more investments in the Kingdom.

Dr. Nabulsi said Jordan is in need of a national policy for rehabilitating the poor and taking care of the children and the disabled and must expand its privatisation policy and reduce public expenditure in order to save funds for the social safety package.

Oman eases taxes to lure foreign capital

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The Gulf state of Oman has introduced fresh reforms in its taxation system to attract foreign capital which it sees as vital for economic growth away from oil, officials said Friday.

Sultan Qaboos, the country's supreme leader, this week approved the reforms to give foreigners more tax exemptions, just a few months after the government decided to push local companies to woo foreign investment.

"We hope the latest reforms will usher in a new stage of attracting foreign investment," Omani National Economy Minister Ahmad bin Abdul Nabi Makki, told the United Arab Emirates daily Al Itihad.

"Foreign investments are the ideal instrument for stimulating the national economy and eventually improving the living standards of the citizens."

Under the new rules, joint-stock companies which have a foreign ownership of more than 90 per cent will be subject to a tax of five to 50 per cent. Few companies here have such a high percentage of foreign ownership.

Previously, companies with foreign ownership of 65 per cent were subject to the higher tax levels.

Companies in which foreign shareholding is below 90 per cent will now be treated as Omani institutions, which are required to pay only between five and 7.5 per cent in taxes, according to the new law.

Makki said the reforms also included permitting Omani banks and companies with capital of more than two million Omani riyals (\$5.2 million) to set up investment portfolios for foreigners for the first time, with a maximum 49 per cent of capital in shares.

Oman, which is not a member of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries, produces around 900,000 barrels per day of oil, providing more than two thirds of its income.

But it hopes the reforms will provide other sources of income, mainly farming and industry.

Russian economy at turning point, prime minister says

MOSCOW (R) — Russia's economy, at last showing signs of recovery, is at a turning point and poised for growth, Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin said Thursday.

But in a survey of economic performance this year made to the cabinet, he said the authorities still had to untangle a web of unpaid bills between companies and the state which were holding back growth and undermining fiscal policy.

"We're on the point of a breakthrough. We can raise up the Russian economy and make it competitive and respected throughout the world. But it could work out differently," he said.

Since President Boris Yeltsin installed a new reformist cabinet in March, Mr. Chernomyrdin said, pension arrears had been paid, inflation had fallen, interest rates were down, capital was flowing into the country and structural reforms were underway.

Government forecasts at the meeting assume industrial output over the year as a whole would not rise and could fall up to two per cent. But Mr. Chernomyrdin said output had risen in the first half, and in June was two per cent higher than a year earlier.

"This year we note increased business activity in most sectors in industry," he said.

The recovery was also having a positive social effect, fostering the growth of a middle class, he said, pointing to increased ownership of consumer durables such as video players, washing machines and cars, which was spurring Russian output.

But some companies were still technically backward and inefficiently run, and in a state of financial collapse.

The amount of unpaid bills in the economy had nearly doubled to 27 per cent of gross domestic product over the first half of the year. Company profits in real terms were 2-1/2 times lower than a

year ago and companies had no working capital, he said.

Government revenues in the first half of the year were only 64 per cent of budgeted levels, forcing the government to slash spending to 68 per cent of budgeted levels. But tax income in the second quarter had jumped to 87 per cent from 58 per cent in the first.

The government was too course to pay 20 trillion roubles of wage arrears by the end of the year, Mr. Chernomyrdin said.

The government was working vigorously to improve cash flow in the economy by drawing up programmes to restructure debts, he said.

Russia's biggest tax debtors are being forced to choose between bankruptcy and a restructuring programme in which they transfer asset-backed bonds or majority equity stakes to the government in trust while they pay off their taxes, he noted.

REUTERS The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates Prices as at 25/07/97 10:04									
US Dollar	1.0000	1.5341	0.6010	1.5128	116.72	1.3846	178.80	2.0860	6.1832
DE Mark	0.6482	0.6273	0.6273	0.6273	0.6273	0.6273	0.6273	0.6273	0.6273
GB Sterling	1.5840	1.0580	0.8207	2.5172	184.35	1.5940	207.30	3.4380	18.2882
CHF Franc	0.6610	121.15	0.3005	0.3005	0.3005	0.3005	0.3005	0.3005	0.3005
JP Yen	0.0086	1.5700	0.8741	1.2980	1.1852	18.29	174.88	8.2938	
CA Dollar	0.7222	1.3239	0.4221	1.0821	1.18	0.6273	0.6273	0.6273	0.6273
IT Lira	0.0005	1.0280	0.3368	0.0847	153.57	0.7748		11.26	3.4891
NL Guilder	0.4840	0.75	0.2906	0.7522	0.6273	0.6273	0.6273	0.6273	0.6273
FR Franc	0.1617	0.2965	0.0971	24.4670	18.85	0.2235	33.38	33.3900	

Middle Eastern Currencies									
US Dollar	1.0000	0.7080	2.7404	0.5770	3.5395	0.3037	3.5705	1839.00	3.3930
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	0.2688	0.1800	0.1008	0.57	0.0810	0.58	416.38	0.8097
Saudi Riyal	0.2688	1.8807	0.3485	1.8505	1.0305	0.0834	1.01	422.88	0.8323
Bahrain Dinar	2.25	0.2748	0.1948	1.8505	1.0305	0.0834	1.01	422.88	0.8323
Qatar Dinar	3.2222	2.2545	12.3480	1.2413	1.54	1.25	0.0834	1.01	422.88
Kuwait Dinar	0.2724	0.1932	1.0216	1.0216	1.0216	0.0834	1.01	422.88	0.8323
Emirates Dinar	0.2724	0.1932	1.0216	1.0216	1.0216	0.0834	1.01	422.88	0.8323
Lebanese L1000	0.65	0.0807	2.2545	0.2455	0.2455	0.0834	1.01	422.88	0.8323
Egyptian	0.2947	0.2090	1.1053	0.1111	1.0728	0.0834	1.01	422.88	0.8323

Energy									
Brent	19.35	19.11							
WTI	19.35	19.11							
Bonny	19.35	19.11							
Dubai	19.35	19.11							
UL Gas	194.00	192.00							

Metal Prices									
Gold (oz)	323.9	324.4							
Silver (oz)	4.33	4.35							
Platinum (oz)	422.5	425.5							
AL (3 Months)	1657	0							
CU (3 Months)	2361	2383							
ZN (3 Months)	1623	1625							
Lead (3 Months)	852	853							
Ni (3 Months)	7180	7170							

Main Equity Indices									
New York	DOW JONES	8101.13	-15.8	-0.19	8157.11	8080.45	8116.33		
New York	S&P 500	628.35	-0.43	-0.15	645.88	636.4	640.25		
London	FT-SE 100	4851.5	-11.4	-0.23	4881.2	4834.8	4862.9		
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	20308.54	-10.51	-0.51	20368.8	20351.7	20361.1		
Paris	CAC 40	3025.94	-52.41	-1.75	3036.82	2987.46	2973.53		
Frankfurt	DAX	4317.64	-18.1	-0.42	4350.43	4336.26	4335.74		

JOD Cross Rates									
US Dollar	0.7080	0.710							
GB Sterling	1.5840	1.594							
DE Mark	0.6482	0.6482							
CHF Franc	0.6610	0.6610							
JP Yen	0.0086	0.0086							
FR Franc	0.1617	0.1617							
IT Lira	0.0005	0.0005							
NL Guilder	0.4840	0.4840							

Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

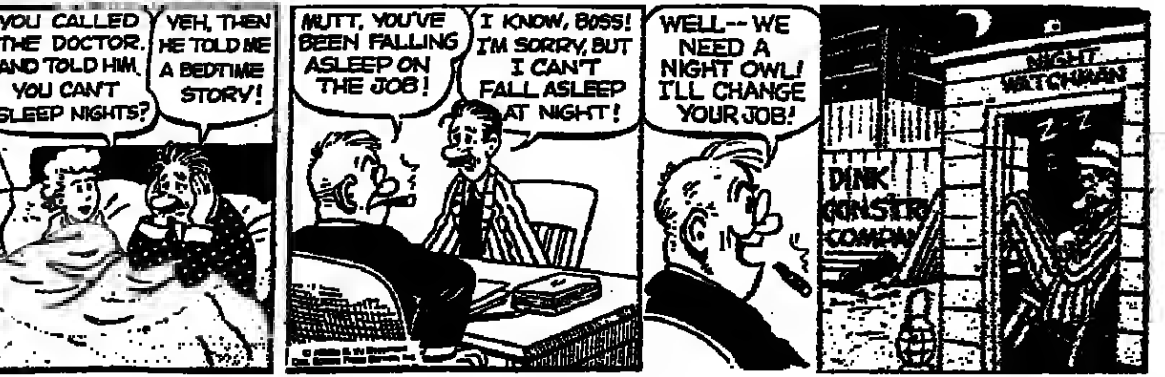
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



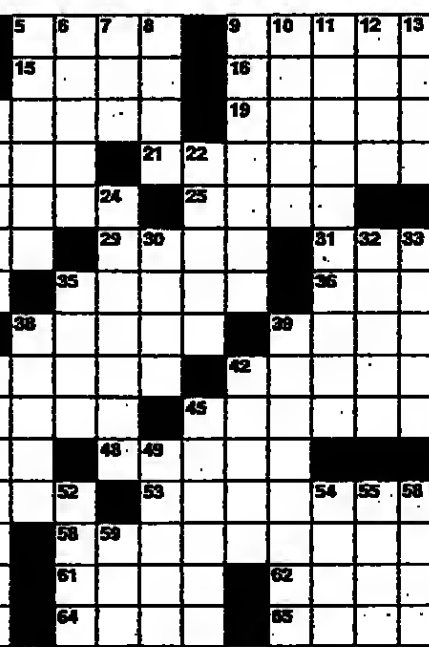
THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

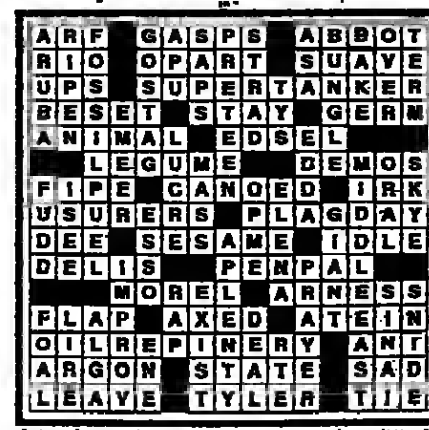
- 1 Encourage
- 5 K-rations
- 9 Hindu caste member
- 14 Unreliable one
- 15 A Chaplin
- 16 Tropical palm
- 17 Cephalopods
- 19 Apothegm
- 20 Loathe
- 21 Groups of seven
- 23 Zinc
- 25 Scap work
- 26 "The Piano" player
- 29 Furthermore
- 31 Curve
- 34 — couture
- 35 Scottish resort
- 36 Nominate
- 37 Flag
- 38 Plant with fleshy leaves
- 39 Company of badgers
- 41 Begin
- 42 City on the Po
- 43 Can. prov.
- 44 Poi source
- 45 Pamper
- 46 Addict
- 48 Harbors
- 50 Files
- 53 Pirate
- 57 Lounge lizard
- 58 The Ten Commandments
- 60 Superman
- 61 "My Name is"
- 62 Director Clair
- 63 Carried
- 64 Ochan's "grand old name"
- 65 Transaction

DOWN

- 1 Trudge
- 2 Cereal grass
- 3 Breakfast food
- 4 Non-finishers
- 5 "My — Viny"
- 6 Watered
- 7 Single
- 8 Launder
- 9 Ridicule
- 10 Speechify
- 11 Certain verse lines
- 12 Clitic, e.g.
- 13 Pasture creatures
- 14 Sprite
- 22 Derby site
- 24 Pendant
- 26 Chance of fiction
- 27 Spelling of TV
- 28 One of five
- 30 Oaf
- 32 French composer, Erik
- 33 Exhausted
- 35 Rip
- 38 Ringo or Kay
- 39 Expletive
- 41 Directed
- 42 Aggregate
- 45 Smooth
- 47 An Allen



by William Canine



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HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, JULY 26, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson
Astrologer, Carroll
Parker Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) A fellow associate is trying to get you interested in new activities. However, this would be too costly, so put aside these ideas for other times. Stay at home and relax at home with your pet.

Taurus: (April 20 to May 20) Labour on making your home more attractive and comfortable. Then invite some happy, upbeat guests in for the evening and make them feel welcome by being the perfect host. Have a look at the clock involved.

Gemini: (May 21 to June 21) If you are planning a vacation, go ahead and book it. Make sure your car is running well, since you could have a long drive home.

Cancer: (June 22 to July 22) Reading every day before you sign anything. Try to cut down on your expenses, thereby you will have more funds.

Leo: (July 23 to August 22) If you have some non-urgent business, schedule it for this time. Schedule a meeting with a client or a business partner. You need to make intelligent decisions. Be sure to get plenty of rest before starting.

Virgo: (August 23 to September 22) Having the sun in the 12th house, those who are in the 12th house will have the most trouble. You need to make intelligent decisions. Be sure to get plenty of rest before starting.

Libra: (September 23 to October 22) If any good friends ask you for a favour, say yes. You will be able to do so, since this will be a very good time for you. You will be able to do so, since this will be a very good time for you.

Scorpio: (October 23 to November 21) You should not try to persuade a superior to do a favour for you today, or you will be disappointed. It is better to wait until next week.

Sagittarius: (November 22 to December 21) If you rush out for pleasure today without knowing where you are headed, you will regret it later, since you could be short of funds when an emergency arises, which could be a problem.

Capricorn: (December 22 to January 20) This is a good time today to collect money owed to you, and pay off any pressing bills you have. You should not allow anyone to influence your opinion concerning business activities without all the information necessary.

Aquarius: (January 21 to February 19) Before you present your ideas for a new project to a group today, be sure all the facts and figures are correct. You could look you up in the news of a project.

Pisces: (February 20 to March 20) Make sure you are speaking the language in your correspondence today. And show that you are interested in all the details for being successful.

Jordan adds 4 more medals in karate, wrestling

Taekwondo team returns with 13 medals as equestrian, swimming teams falter

By Aleen Bannayan
and JSYIF
press committee

JORDAN'S KARATE team Friday won three bronze medals while Ismail Issa Al Sheikh added a silver medal in freestyle wrestling on the 13th day of the 8th Pan-Arab Games which conclude in Beirut July 27.

Al Sheikh took second place after losing to Syria's Mohammad Khanati who took the gold. Egypt's Ahmad Abdul Rahim took the bronze.

The karate medals came in the women's event by Nawal Bayyari, Azahir Zuhdi and Butheina Mahsiri. The draw came in Jordan's favour with Bayyari and Zuhdi getting first round byes.

In wrestling, Jordan's Muir Sallaq lost to Egypt's Hisham Mustafa in the 58-kilogramme category and finished fourth. Teammate Abdul Hakim Abu Sneh, who took a silver medal in Greco-Roman wrestling earlier in the week, also finished fourth after losing to Egypt's Walid Batawi.

Friday's four medals brought Jordan's medals tally up to 36, with 7 gold, 9 silver and 20 bronze.

Swimming results were far from competitive records again as Faris Naser finished seventh in the 200-metres breaststroke; Andre Khouri also finished seventh in the 200m butterfly; Hana Majaj came in fifth in the 100m butterfly, and in the 800m freestyle Rania Ghosheh came in eighth but registered a new Jordanian record while Hiba Nasser finished 11th.

In the equestrian team event, Jordan finished at a disappointing 7th place among 8 competing teams.

Sinan Nashashibi, Ra'ead Naser, Husam Bahou, and Hani Bisharat represented Jordan.

Lebanon took the gold, Saudi Arabia the silver and Libya the bronze.

The Kingdom's taekwondo team was one of the most impressive earning a total of 13 medals and making it the most successful Jordanian participation in the Pan-Arab Games to date.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan congratulated the taekwondo delegation on their admirable achievement.

In the women's event, Zaha Talhouni and Alisar Matar took golds for Jordan as Nancy Hindi took silver and Fatima Sayyad and Ahlam Bino bronze.

In the men's competition, Hussein Tahleb took gold, Raed Naji, Ali Asmar and Mohammad Abul Ruz silver and Shadi Abu Taleb, Daoud Matar, Ibrahim Aqel and Mohammad Nawwaf bronze.

The boxing and athletics teams also secured 10 medals altogether.

The boxers won two gold medals by Mohammad Abu Khadijeh and Ayman Al Nadi and three bronze by Kamal Abdul Majid, Khaldoun Abdul Hameed and Basel Hindawi.

In athletics, Nada Kassar won a gold in the discus and a silver medal in the shot put; Fakhraddin Fuad added another gold in the high jump; Ala' Abdul Hadi won a bronze in the triple jump and Amal Matar took another bronze in the women's marathon.

Ayed Khawaldeh became the first Jordanian to win three bronze weightlifting medals; Amer Natour took silver and bronze medals in

fencing and Mousa Khalaf took a silver for Jordan in judo.

Abdul Hakim Abu Soeineh took the silver medal in the 69-kilogramme Greco-Roman wrestling while in table tennis Iyad Maknay and Abdul Aziz Rida took the bronze in doubles and added another bronze in the team event.

In women's basketball, Jordan finished fourth after losing to Lebanon while the men came in 6th after losing 56-53.

In shooting, Khaled Naghaway was eliminated from the top six qualifying positions so were the rest of the Kingdom's swimmers. Hana Majaj took the only swimming bronze medal making up for otherwise disappointing results by her teammates.

Over 3,000 athletes are in Beirut for the largest gathering of Arab youth since the event was last held in Syria in 1992.

With Iraqi athletes barred from competition because of a boycott threat by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, 19 countries are taking part in the Beirut Games with only Somalia and the Comoros missing the event.

Twenty events are being contested at the Games excluding kick-boxing, handball, gymnastics, bodybuilding, hockey, diving and water polo for technical and financial reasons.

The Kingdom's 187-strong delegation which includes 94 men and 33 women athletes competed in 14 of the 20 events. The delegation also includes 27 officials, 20 coaches and 13 referees.

Jordan dropped participation in cycling, tennis and volleyball, and will be competing in athletics, basket-

ball, karate, swimming, taekwondo, table tennis, boxing, equestrian, fencing, soccer, weightlifting, judo, freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling and shooting. Other events at the Games include golf and yachting.

In line with international rules, drug testing was introduced for the first time since the Arab Games were launched in 1953. All gold medalists are being tested for performance-enhancing drugs, in addition to one other competitor selected in a draw in each event.

Lebanon is hosting the Arab World's premier sports event for the first time since the second Arab Games in 1957. Jordan has received approval to host the 9th Pan-Arab Games in 2001. Kuwait was chosen as a substitute in case Jordan withdrew their bid.

Jordanian sports officials have underlined their support for organising and taking part in the Pan-Arab Games which have only been held seven times since 1953.

But the Games, designed to emphasise Arab brotherhood, were clouded by Lebanon's refusal to grant the Iraqi team entry visas for fear of provoking Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

Jordan has taken part in all past seven Pan-Arab Games gaining a total of 49 medals (7 gold, 16 silver, 26 bronze).

Jordan finished 9th overall in the last Pan-Arab Games in 1992 with 1 gold, 6 silver, and 6 bronze medals.

The Pan-Arab Games were held in Alexandria 1953, Beirut 1957, Casablanca 1961, Cairo 1965, Damascus 1976, Rabat 1985 and Damascus 1992.



Schedule of events of Jordanian competitors at the 8th Pan-Arab Games for Saturday July 26, 1997

- Karate
- Equestrian
- Swimming

Grand Prix
100-metres freestyle (Rania Ghosheh, Hana Majaj)
1500-metres freestyle (Yazan Khouri)
400-metres medley (Hana Majaj)

Medals Table (excluding Friday's results)

NATION	G	S	B	TOTAL
Egypt	82	43	26	151
Algeria	32	35	42	109
Morocco	18	13	17	48
Qatar	8	6	2	16
Jordan	7	8	17	32
Tunisia	7	7	20	34
Syria	6	22	27	55
Saudi Arabia	5	9	19	33
Lebanon	4	15	41	60
Kuwait	1	11	15	27
Oman	1	1	1	3
Sudan	0	1	2	3
Libya	0	1	1	2
Palestine	0	0	4	4
Bahrain	0	0	1	1



Rania Alwani of Egypt competes in the women's 50-metre freestyle at the Pan Arab Games in the Bekaa Valley of Zahle. Alwani won the gold medal in a time of 27.14 seconds (Reuters photo)

Jordan prepares for soccer final

By a Jordan Times
Staff Reporter

JORDAN'S SOCCER team is preparing for the upcoming match against Syria in the final of the soccer event at the Pan-Arab Games which conclude in Beirut following Sunday's match.

The Kingdom's team had scored a landmark 3-2 over Kuwait to qualify for the final for the first time.

Syria beat Lebanon 3-2 in the other semi-final Thursday to qualify for the final.

His Majesty King Hussein and HRH Crown Prince Hassan congratulated the players on their historic achievement and urged them to continue their efforts in the upcoming match.

Jordanian who took to the streets following the match honking horns and waving the flags in celebration, now hope the team will continue its successful run and win the gold medal.

The players expressed their happiness at Syria reaching the final saying that had relieved the extra pressure of having to play the hosts.

It was, meanwhile, reported that Nabil Ayyad of Lebanon would probably officiate the match.

Following a practice session Friday, the team's head coach announced that players were free from injuries and looked forward to the final.

The Syrian coach Anwar Abdul Qader

told the press committee that he "had utmost respect for the Jordanian team."

"They displayed coherent teamwork and are moving the ball fast. That's what made them different from the rest of the team," he added.

"I hope both teams show sportsmanship. Let's leave the result is up to the circumstances of the match."

Jordan upset expectations as onlookers had nominated Kuwait — a team with an impressive record in Asia and a World Cup qualifier in 1982 — to advance to the final.

Kuwait now play Lebanon for 3rd and 4th places.

Lebanon's Abdul Fattah Shiyab heads the top scorers with 5 goals followed by Abdallah Shiyab of Jordan with 4 and Seif Bayazeed of Syria also with 4.

Eight countries took part in the soccer event. Group 1 included Jordan, Lebanon, Oman and Libya while Group 2 included Kuwait, the UAE, Syria and Mauritania.

Only the top two teams in each group qualified to the second round.

Jordan topped Group A and qualified to the second round after a 3-1 win over Oman. Lebanon joined them from Group A after beating Libya 2-1 and were joined by Syria and Kuwait from Group 2.

Jordan had scored 1-1 draws with Libya and Lebanon in the first round. The Kingdom's best result in past soccer competitions at the Games was fourth.

Kingdom protests controversial rulings in taekwondo Jordan bids for Arab kick boxing, athletics championships Equestrian team hopeful in Grand Prix today

By Aleen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AS THE 8th Pan Arab Games near the end on Sunday, most of the Kingdom's athletes are back following the end of their respective competitions and the remaining ones hope to do well capping the most successful Jordanian participation in the history of the Pan-Arab Games with a total of 33 medals so far.

The head of Jordan's delegation Dr. Sari Hamdan, Friday asked to Minister of Culture and Youth Qassem Abu Ein to provide the delegation with another JD5,000 to cover extra expenses incurred by the delegation.

Meanwhile, as equestrian and karate teams resume competition today it was reported that the taekwondo delegation had objected to rulings by Korean referees, especially in the women's event.

Lama Haddad, who lost her taekwondo match in a controversial decision by the referee after she was leading 4-3. Friday was

awarded a complimentary sportsmanship medal by the Arab Taekwondo Federation.

The medal was the first awarded to any athlete at the Games and proved that the Korean referee had undoubtedly wronged Haddad in his decision.

Officials said the Kingdom's delegation will submit a tape-recording of the match to the international federation showing clearly that Haddad was the winner.

Jordan won a total of 13 medals in taekwondo including 3 golds, 4 silver and 6 bronze.

Egypt won first place in the team taekwondo event, followed by Morocco in second place and Jordan was third.

All eight athletes who took part in the event won medals — a first in the game's history in the Kingdom.

Three Jordanian referees also officiated the matches but declined to do so on the second day because of their objection to the rulings of the Korean referees who are coaches in Egypt.

EGYPT FRIDAY won the gold medal of the women's basketball event after defeating hosts Lebanon 73-44. Tunisia took silver after finishing second, Lebanon was third, Jordan fourth and Syria fifth. The Kingdom's team returned to Amman after beating Syria 56-53, while losing to Tunisia 52-41, to Lebanon 60-51, and Egypt 79-46.

Jordan bids for Arab events

The Arab Kick Boxing Federation has approved Jordan's bid to host the 1st Arab Kick Boxing Championship which is scheduled for September 1998.

Furthermore, Ministry of Culture and Youth Secretary General Thounan Obeidat discussed with Suleiman Al Zaidi, the president of the Arab Athletics Federation, the possibility of Amman hosting the 8th Arab Athletics Championship next year.

Egypt wins record 82 gold medals

Egypt grabbed 11 gold medals Thursday, raising their haul so far to a record 82, the best performance by any country since the Games began in

1953.

Egypt surpassed its own record of 77 golds that it bagged at the inaugural Arab Games in Alexandria, Egypt. The closest that any country came was Syria, which took 73 golds in the 1976 Games in Damascus.

Algeria is second in the medal standing with 32 golds. Morocco is third with 18 golds.

But the most keenly contested event of the Games was the Lebanon-Syria soccer semifinal Thursday. Syria won 3-2 when sudden death was applied in extra-time after the two sides were level 2-2.

Syria will now clash with Jordan in the final (see separate story).

Saudi Arabia reached the final of the men's basketball after defeating the United Arab Emirates 79-64. They will meet Syria, who defeated Lebanon 69-59 in the other semifinal

Thursday.

Equestrian Grand Prix today

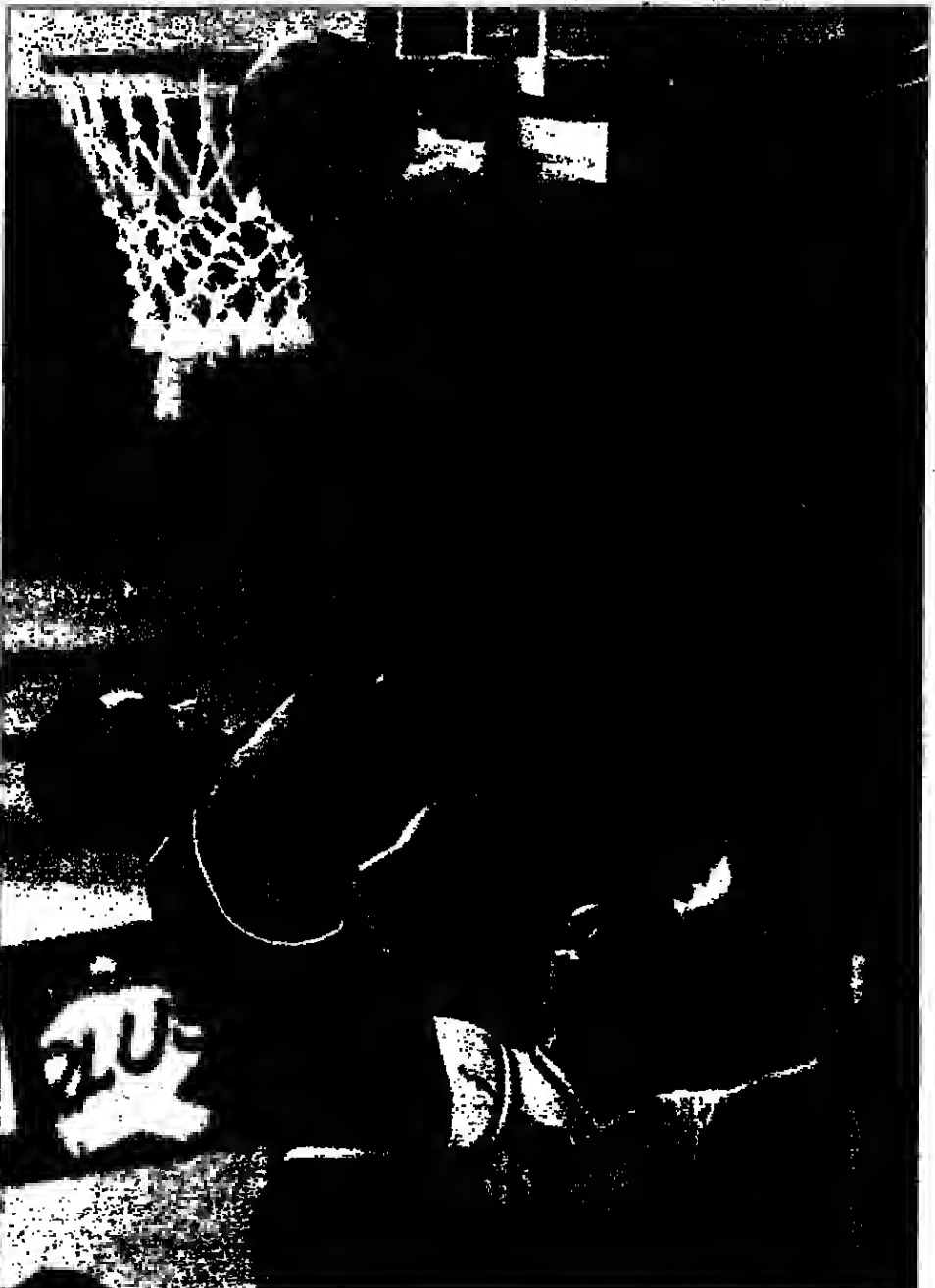
The equestrian team hopes to reverse the fortunes of the seventh place finish in the team event Thursday when the Grand Prix event gets underway today.

The event includes two round with the hurdles set at 135 and 140 centimetres.

Twenty-five of the 37 participating riders will make it to the second round.

Jordan will compete alongside Syria, Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Lebanon and Egypt.

Her Royal Highness Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein had won the bronze medal in the 1992 Games in Syria.



Abdul Latif Abed of the UAE (L) tries to score a basket while Ali Al Moghrabi of Saudi Arabia attempts to stop him during the semi-final in the basketball tournament at the Pan Arab Games in Beirut. The Saudis won the match 79-64 (Reuters photo)

TODAY AT	CINEMA TEL:634144	CINEMA TEL:634144	CINEMA TEL:699238	CINEMA TEL:671420	Mabil & Alsham Theatre TEL: 625155
	PHILADELPHIA "1"	PHILADELPHIA "2"	PLAZA	CONCORD	CONCORD "1"
	Jim Carrey ... in	Macaulay Culkin & Elijah Wood ... in	Chris O'Donnell...in	CONCORD "1"	Kevin Costner & Rene Russo...in
	LIAR LIAR	THE GOOD SON	MAD LOVE	TIN CUP	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:30, 10:45
	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:15, 5:00	CONCORD "2"	Michael Jordan...in
			Adel Imam...in	SPACEJAM	Shows: 3:30, 6:00 only
			BAKHIT AND ADELAH (PART 2) (Aljardal wal kanaka)		
			Shows: 8:30, 10:30		
					The satirical play
					AMN AI ALYA HO
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Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia makes a backhand return during his third round match at the Austrian Tennis Open against Italy's Renzo Furlan. Kafelnikov won the match 7-6, 6-7, 6-1 (Reuters photo)

Ivanisevic cruises, Krajicek claws way to victory

LOS ANGELES (R) — Back from a two-week yachting holiday, Goran Ivanisevic continued to cruise at the \$303,000 Infiniti Open despite the effects of a bad stomach.

The top-seed reeled off 12 aces to sail past 125th-ranked Frenchman Olivier Delaitre 7-5 7-6 (7-2) Thursday and move into the quarter-finals of the men's tournament.

Ivanisevic suffered from intestinal distress earlier in the week, forcing the 25-year-old Croat to default in Monday's opening-round doubles match.

"Today was the first day I didn't have a temperature," said Ivanisevic. "It's calmed down a little bit but I'm still not 100 per cent. My stomach was swollen, it was some kind of inflammation. Just like a balloon, it was so big."

Nearly sinking from contention was former Wimbledon champion and two-time Los Angeles winner Richard Krajicek, who barely survived with a 7-5 5-7 7-6 (7-5) win over 21-year-old rookie Glenn Weiner.

Krajicek saved four match points in the 10th game of the third set to level the match at 5-5 in a 22-point game. The Dutchman finally dismissed the South African-born qualifier with two strong points after reaching 5-5 in the tiebreak.

Krajicek, who thundered in 24 aces, admitted he did not know who the 280th-ranked Weiner was before the match. "But I got a formal introduction," he joked after the two-hour, 15-minute struggle. "I don't think I'll forget him."

Weiner was thrilled despite the outcome. "It was the best match of my life," he gushed. "It's a thrill to play a top player, it's a dream to play in front of my home crowd and my mom. Wow, wow it was a great experience."

Also advancing to Friday's quarters was sixth seed Jim Courier, who beat qualifier Mahesh Bhupathi of India 7-6 (7-5) 6-3, and unseeded Byron Black of Zimbabwe.

Black took a 6-2 7-6 (7-1) win over Justin Gimelstob, who had ousted Andre Agassi, to set up a clash against Ivanisevic.

Poor performances in the grand slams, losing in the first round at the French and in the second round at

Wimbledon, had prompted the 25-year-old Ivanisevic to take his first holiday after nine years on the tour. He cruised with friends around the Croatian islands to try and relieve his frustrations.

"I needed to get away," said the World No. 3. "I had a great time. I went spear fishing and didn't think about tennis the whole time."

GOREN BRIDGE

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THE TALK OF THE THREE OF SPADES

Both vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH
♠ A 10 6 2
♥ 7 2
♦ A 3
♣ A J 10 8 7 4

WEST
♠ 3
♥ 3
♦ J 10 8 7 6 5
♣ K Q 9 3

EAST
♠ Void
♥ A K Q J 10 8 7 4
♦ A K Q
♣ A 2

SOUTH
♠ K Q J 8 8 7 6 4
♥ 6 5
♦ A 2
♣ 6

The bidding:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1♠ Pass 2♠ 4♠ Pass
4♠ Pass 6♠ Pass

Opening lead: Three of ♣

Our vote for one of the best bridge books ever written will be easy. Rich on the list is "Right Through the Pack," which has recently been re-released in paperback. (Robert Duvall & Norman de V. Hart. Deyan Press, paperback, 328 pp. Available from The Bridge World, 29 W. 94th St., New York, NY 10024. \$12.95 plus \$3 postage and handling. N.Y. residents add sales tax.) Not only are the cards beautifully exposed but the stories accompanying them are clever and

the ending stunning. This story is subtitled "A Trick that Killed Dummy."

"East bid hearts vigorously, but North-South were not to be denied, and South was eventually allowed to buy the trick at six spades. West led the three of hearts, and East's seven took the trick. East pondered for a few moments, and then made the superb return of the four of hearts. South had to head the trick with the six; West ruffed with me; and thus forced out dummy's live of trumps."

"All was now over for the declarer. He still had two entries in dummy with which to set up the clubs, but he lacked the third entry to cash them — the entry which the five of spades would have afforded. There was no getting away from South's losing diamond."

"Was that not a beautiful defense? And observe the important part played by the differing values of the low spades and the low hearts. Because East's four of hearts was lower than South's six, West was made to ruff; and because I was one spot higher than my brother, the declarer, North's five of trumps had to go, and dummy was killed. Not a single club could be made except the ace."

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British town council bans pro boxing

LONDON (R) — A British town council has banned professional boxing on its premises as a health risk, a move decided on Friday as "nonsensical" by an opposition councillor.

Councillors in Bury, greater Manchester, voted 23-19 on Thursday to ban professional boxing in the town's leisure facilities although amateur bouts will continue to be allowed. "There is evidence that continual heading of a football causes damage and we don't ban that on our premises," said deputy council leader John Byrne. "We don't ban smoking and drinking either. In fact, we sell cigarettes and alcohol."

"It was a completely nonsensical decision," added Byrne, who said Bury subsidised an amateur boxing club. "It was totally inconsistent."

Council leader Derek Boden said medical evidence that boxing produced permanent brain damage swayed the vote.

"We do have responsibility and we're trying to act in a responsible way," said Boden. "Our leisure facilities exist to promote health and well-being. We don't see how we can do that if

we allow professional boxing."

Bury, home of British fly-weight champion Ady Lewis, imposed a temporary moratorium on professional bouts after the 1995 death of Scottish boxer James Murray.

Murray died of a brain haemorrhage after a British bantamweight title fight against Drew Docherty in Glasgow at which fans rioted.

The British boxing board of control said it would seek legal advice whether the ban could be challenged.

"We're very surprised that they would pick on the professional side of the sport and not the amateur side when it's the same sport," said BBC spokesman Rob Smith.

"I would have thought that in the not too distant future, Mr Lewis would like to defend his title in front of a home audience."

"It seems very unfair to Ady Lewis and to the youth of Bury," said Smith. He said he knew of at least one council which had imposed a ban but then revoked it when challenged by a promoter.

MAJOR LEAGUE RESULTS

American League

Kansas City	5	Minnesota	3
Boston	3	Oakland	0
Seattle	11	Cleveland	1
Toronto	5	Milwaukee	4
White Sox	2	Texas	1
Anaheim at NY Yankees	Postponed - rain		

National League

Philadelphia	7	San Francisco	4
San Diego	8	Pittsburgh	6
Houston	10	Montreal	5
Colorado	7	Chicago Cubs	1
NY Mets	3	Los Angeles	1

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Seles reaches quarters, next meets Martinez

PALO ALTO, California (R) — A recharged Monica Seles began her summer hard court swing by pounding Italy's Rita Grande 6-2 6-1 Thursday in 50 minutes in the second round of the \$450,000 Bank of the West Classic.

The second-seeded Seles is trying to shrug off a seemingly never-ending spate of injuries, the most recent of which is a bad back.

In the past two years, the former number one has been plagued with a bum knee, bad shoulder, painful wrist and a sore Achilles heel.

The Yugoslav-born American says the hundreds of hours she has put in practising the past two years trying to come back from her April 1993 stabbing has been a painful experience.

"It has really taken a toll on my body," Seles said. "Not picking up a racket for two years and then getting right back in it. I probably went too fast."

Grande, however, could not take advantage of Seles's poor condition and was completely overwhelmed by her sharp angles and rapid-fire returns.

"She is so much better than me," Grande said. "She played too fast and too hard for me."

Seles will meet sixth seed Conchita Martinez in the quarter-finals. The Spaniard crushed American Amy Frazier 6-1 6-1 on Thursday. Seles is 11-0 lifetime against Martinez.

Seles has only played eight tournaments in 1997 and has not won a title in 10 months. Seles has also been beaten three times by number one ranked Martina Hingis, who is the top seed here.

Seles does not take comfort in the fact that she has played Hingis closer with every match. "If I get to play Martina again hopefully I'll play better because she's playing really great right now."

Grande said the 16-year-old Hingis is a much better player than Seles at this point.

"Martina is younger, she's enjoying it so much, she's playing so relaxed and she's stronger," Grande said.

Despite her number three ranking, Seles has been coming up empty, at least on her own scale, which weighs her nine Grand Slam crowns against a title-less 1997. But the two-time winner of this tournament believes she can reach the top again.

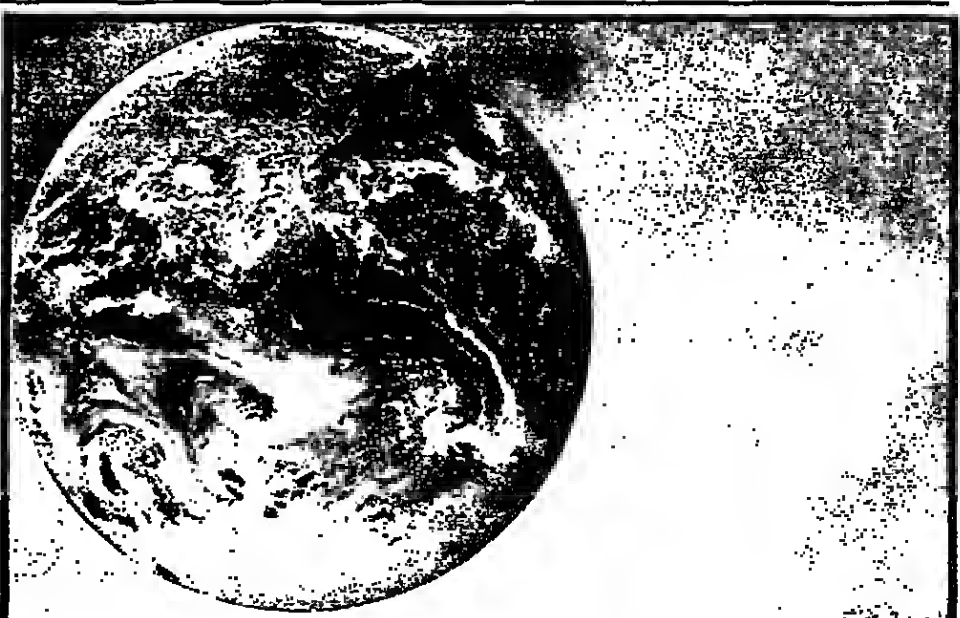
"I really do think I can," Seles said. "But it will take better tennis and a commitment from me. My level has really dropped from four years ago. If I didn't think it was possible, I probably wouldn't be playing."

Off-court, the 23-year-old Seles is spending most of her time giving emotional support to her 63-year-old father and coach, Karoly, who is battling stomach cancer. After Wimbledon, Seles went home to Florida to spend time with him.

"It was really great to see my dad. I don't want to go that long without seeing my family again. It was nice to be home and I feel I kind of recharged my batteries," she said.

Seventh-seeded American Kim Po also moved into the quarter-finals with a 6-3 6-1 victory over Ai Sugiyama of Japan. Po will face third seed Amanda Coetzer of South Africa.

Unseeded American Linda Wild earned a quarter-final match against Hingis by beating Luxembourg's Anne Kremer 6-3 6-4. The other quarter-final will pit fourth seed Lindsay Davenport against Russian Elena Likhovtseva.



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Scotland promised first parliament since 1707

LONDON (R) — Scotland would get its first parliament for almost 300 years under plans unveiled by the British government Thursday, but ministers insisted it would not be an initial step on the high road to independence.

"Scotland will remain firmly part of the United Kingdom," Scottish Secretary Donald Dewar wrote in a foreword to a policy white paper setting out proposals for an Edinburgh parliament with wide-ranging powers to start sitting in the year 2000.

The establishment of subsidiary parliaments for Scotland and Wales was a key part of the labour party's plans to reform Britain's centralised constitution that helped it sweep to power at the general election, May 1.

The new Scottish body would be the first legislative authority north of the border since the 1707 act of union, which brought together the kingdoms of Scotland and England.

It will be introduced provided Scotland's five million people approve the plans in a referendum, September 11.

The new 129-member assembly, to be elected unlike its London equivalent by a system of proportional representation, would make laws in many areas and administer education, health care, environment, agriculture and arts policies.

Foreign and defence policy, the economic and monetary system, employment legislation, social security and certain sensitive areas such as abortion, broadcast-



Speaking at a media briefing in Edinburgh, Secretary of State for Scotland Donald Dewar outlines the details of the White Paper proposing a separate parliament for Scotland, July 25. The governments plans for a Scottish Assembly have been heavily criticised by the Conservatives for initiating the break up of the United Kingdom (Reuters photo)

ing and gambling would continue to be dealt with by the London government.

The Edinburgh body would rely mainly on a financial grant from the London government, but would have the right to raise or lower tax on earned income by three pence in the pound, giving it a maximum of 450 million pounds (\$753 million) a year.

The White Paper was published two days after a document proposing a similar, but much less powerful, assembly for Wales.

The main opposition Conservative party warned during the election campaign that labour proposals for "devolution" to Scotland and Wales risked the break-up of the United Kingdom.

It said inevitable clashes between Edinburgh and London would fuel demands by the Scottish Nationalists, who won six seats at the election, for full independence.

But the Conservatives were rewarded for their stance by losing all their parliamentary seats in Wales and Scotland, convincing observers that the referendum, in Scotland at least, will be a triumph for labour and their Liberal Democrat devolution allies.

A narrow majority of Scots who voted approved devolution proposals in a referendum held by the last Labour government in 1979, but they were never put into effect.

Mr. Dewar said the new

parliament was needed to bring government closer to ordinary people.

"This reform will not in itself solve the problem of resources or banish the dilemmas of government," he wrote.

"What it can do is connect and involve people with the decisions that matter to them. It can bring a sense of ownership to political debate and a new confidence to our affairs."

The White Paper proposes to cut the 72 Scottish seats in the London parliament, probably to around 60, to head off possible complaints from the English that Scotland is over-represented. The change would not take effect until around 2005.

Irish prime minister meets Gerry Adams, seeks to reassure Unionists

DUBLIN (AFP) — Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern met Friday with Northern Ireland's Nationalist leaders, and they sought afterwards to assure Unionists of their commitment to "exclusively democratic methods."

It was Mr. Ahern's first meeting with Gerry Adams, leader of the Sinn Fein political wing of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), and John Hume, head of the moderate Catholic Social Democratic and Labour party, since the IRA ceasefire last weekend.

The meeting followed the Unionists' rejection Wednesday of an Anglo-Irish plan for paramilitary disarmament that had sought to inject new life into stalled peace talks. They resume in Belfast, September 15, with Sinn Fein present for the first time.

"We recognise that ultimately we can resolve this problem only with the participation and agreement of the Unionist people," their joint statement said.

"The challenge is to find the structures that will protect and accommodate the equal rights and identities of both Unionists and Nationalists, and that can obtain the consent and allegiance of all. "We are all committed to the achievement of lasting peace and reconciliation on this island based on justice and equality," it added.

The meeting marked the resumption of full contacts between Sinn Fein and the Irish government that were broken off after the ending of the last IRA ceasefire with a London bomb in February 1996.

Mr. Adams declined to comment on the possibility of Bosnia-style proximity talks if there was no agreement on disarmament, saying, "the governments have given a commitment that they want to see substantive all-party talks beginning, September 15 to deal with all the core issues."

"I think there are a number of weeks to go between now and then. Let the two governments do their best to

bring those about," Mr. Ahern said he would meet with any political leader on ways to advance the peace process.

"Any leader of a political party anywhere on the island of Ireland and most particularly from the north of Ireland that wishes to meet me, I'll meet them," he said after the meeting.

"I would be glad to meet David Trimble at any time," he added, referring to the leader of the Ulster Unionist party, the largest Protestant party and one of the three that rejected the disarmament proposal.

"I dearly hope that the day can be reached in the not too distant future when we can be here and that David Trimble and others would be here with us," said Mr. Ahern.

He said that when Foreign Minister Ray Burke and Northern Ireland Secretary Mo Mowlam meet in Dublin next Tuesday, they would accept the commitment of the two governments to a continuation of the talks process.

Sudan wants better relations with U.S., Bashir tells envoy

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Sudan is keen to improve its relations with the United States, President Omar Bashir told a visiting U.S. diplomat this week, reports here said Friday.

"Sudan is willing to overcome the obstacles standing on the way of improving its relations with the United States," he told Gare Smith, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labour on a visit Thursday, the official Al Anbaa daily reported Friday.

Sudan, on Washington's list of countries that sponsor terrorism, has been deprived of U.S. economic aid since Khartoum's Islamist military regime came to power in 1989.

Washington said earlier this year it planned to isolate Khartoum for backing terrorism and abuses of human rights.

Indicating steps taken to end Sudan's 14-year civil war, Gen. Bashir appealed to the international community to urge the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) to "sit down at the negotiating table to spare the blood of the Sudanese."

The SPLA has been fighting Khartoum since 1983 in a war which has cost an estimated one million lives. In April, six southern Sudanese rebel groups signed a peace agreement with Khartoum.

Sudanese officials recently held talks with the U.S. ambassador to Khartoum, Timothy Carney, about a possible U.S. mediation effort. Washington has been accused in the past by Khartoum of backing the southern-based SPLA.

Gen. Bashir told Mr. Smith that the Sudanese government is "genuinely willing for cooperation

with the parties which have not yet joined the peace agreement" signed in April. Quoted in the Sudanese press Thursday, Sudanese Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Mustafa Osman Ismail said the Islamist government had opened a dialogue with the U.S. administration on human rights and other issues.

Mr. Smith arrived in Khartoum Tuesday and met Wednesday with several Sudanese officials including the prosecutor general, Obeid Haj Ali, and the head of a government inquiry into slavery, Mirghani Nasry, officials said.

The U.S. embassy here said Wednesday that Mr. Smith would raise "important human rights questions such as the state of law, freedom of worship, allegations about slavery, the peace process and democracy."

American mother kidnaps her child in south Lebanon

TYRE (AFP) — A 12-year-old Lebanese girl was kidnapped from her home in south Lebanon Friday by her American mother, police said.

Kathy Robin Ubak, who recently arrived in Lebanon and was staying at some friends' house in Beirut, allegedly kidnapped her daughter Lina Hallak from her home in the southern port city of Tyre, Lebanese police officials said.

Ubak, 48, who had asked the permission to take her daughter out for a walk, immediately whisked the child in a car to an

unknown destination, according to police.

"I suspect that Lina was taken to the U.S. embassy and that they are waiting there to receive passports to travel to the U.S. because my daughter's passport is still at home," her father, electrical engineer Hassan Hallak, told Agence France Presse.

He said his ex-wife regularly came to Lebanon to visit the child since their divorce 10 years ago.

Mr. Hallak, who is now remarried with a three-year-old son, said he alerted the police as well as bor-

der and airport security authorities.

In 1994, a three-year-old French-Lebanese boy, Rayan Kadi, was kidnapped by force from a Beirut school playground by his French mother, Violaine Delahais, who was accompanied by two armed men. Delahais, who was then living in France and still fighting a divorce battle with Rayan's father, had managed to return to France with the child despite the fact that Lebanese borders and airport authorities had been alerted by the father.

charges and other corruption-related accusations against her and her businessman husband.

She outraged the secularist establishment, spearheaded by the military, by taking her pro-western True Path Party into a coalition last year with Islamist Necmettin Erbakan's Welfare Party.

Mrs. Ciller served as foreign minister in that government until it collapsed and was replaced by new Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz's secularist alliance last month.

Turkish leaders to meet military

ISTANBUL (R) — Turkey's political and military leaders were to gather Friday for the first meeting of the powerful National Security Council since the new secularist government took office, officials said. They said the council was to meet at an army base in Istanbul at 1130 GMT after laying a wreath at the city's main monument to Turkey's secularist founder Kemal Ataturk.

Newspapers said the council would discuss Islamist businesses and their alleged support for Islamist activism, which the army says poses the greatest threat to Turkey's stability.

The council led the secularist onslaught against the previous Islamist-led government of Necmettin Erbakan, putting pressure on it to adopt measures to clamp down on what the generals called Islamic fundamentalist activism.

After months of wrangling with the military and the country's secularist elite, Mr. Erbakan resigned last month, opening the way to Mr. Yilmaz's loose right-left secularist alliance to take power two weeks ago.

The nine-member council is made up of four military chiefs, the prime minister and three senior ministers. The president chairs the meetings.

Meanwhile, two people were injured Friday by a concussion bomb which exploded in a cafeteria in this southeastern city, reports said.

The two men were passers-by hurt by flying glass from the cafeteria's shattered windows, the Anatolian news agency reported. No customers were reported injured.

Turkish court takes over Ciller probe from military

ANKARA (R) — A Turkish civilian court Friday took over a military inquiry into charges that former Prime Minister Tansu Ciller accepted money from abroad to work against the national interest, Anatolian news agency said.

"The Army's prosecutor office decided the probe was out of its jurisdiction and sent back the investigation file to the Ankara state security court late on Thursday," Anatolian said.

The state security court had previously ruled that the case was outside its jurisdic-

tion but began to look at the claims anew on Friday after the military decision, Anatolian said.

The army, which has the power to try civilians on charges relating to military matters, launched an investigation earlier this month against Mrs. Ciller based on accusations made by far-left leader Dogu Perincek.

Mr. Perincek said that Mrs. Ciller, who became Turkey's first woman prime minister in 1993, had worked for the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Ms. Ciller denies the

Egypt, Iran to renew economic ties

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt said Friday it plans to strengthen its economic ties with Iran for the first time since breaking off diplomatic relations after the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Tehran.

An Egyptian trade ministry spokesman, quoted by the daily Al Akhbar, said "the coming period will be marked by a large increase in Iranian investment in Egypt." The spokesman said an Iranian business delegation was expected in Cairo in the coming days to

seal joint projects worth a total of \$236 million, notably in the electric appliances and clothes industries.

He said the delegation would also agree the sale of Egyptian food products to Iran.

A trade fair of Egyptian products is also to be organized in Tehran for the first time since the 1979 revolution.

The two countries have been at odds since former Egyptian President Anwar Al Sadat welcomed the

ousted Iranian shah to his country.

However, relations have warmed since Iran's Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati travelled to Cairo in May on a fence-mending visit, and since the election of moderate cleric Mohammad Khatami as Iranian president.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said Wednesday that Iran is seeking closer military ties with his country to counter growing Israeli-Turkish defence cooperation.

Hollywood stars sue Australian magazines

SYDNEY (R) — Three leading Hollywood stars have begun defamation proceedings against Australian magazines, an Australian law firm said Friday. Bruce Willis and Demi Moore are suing New Idea over a story that said Moore's obsession with exercise and an eating disorder were driving the couple apart. In a separate case, comedian Jim Carrey has begun an action over an article in the Woman's Day magazine which alleged he had sexually harassed actresses Jennifer Tilly, Courtney Cox, Alicia Silverstone, Drew Barrymore and Courtney Love.

The legal firm of Mallesons Stephen Jacques said in a statement that the three stars had issued defamation proceedings in the Supreme Court of Victoria on Thursday.

"Bruce Willis, Demi Moore and Jim Carrey all intend to pursue their legal rights vigorously and are confident of vindication," the firm's partner John Waters said.

Failed nude Taiwan politico now plans nude nuptial

TAIPEI (R) — Taiwan's stripper politician Hsu Shao-tan said she would wed in October and planned something typically flamboyant — nude nuptials out of doors, with the public invited. "I feel if a nation can appreciate and comfortably face the art of nudity, it will be a more open, happier and healthier nation," Spinster Hsu told state television. "This is the message I want to send through the wedding." Hsu shot to fame as a candidate in Taiwan's early 1990s parliamentary elections with audacious stunts such as bursting naked through a flag of the ruling Nationalist Party and titillating voters with sexually suggestive slogans.

Hendrix guitar could fetch \$300,000 at auction

LONDON (R) — A Fender Stratocaster guitar owned by rock legend Jimi Hendrix is to be the star of a London auction where it could fetch more than \$300,000, auctioneers said. The mid-60's instrument was given by Hendrix to his New York neighbour Al Cooper, founder of the rock band Blood, Sweat and Tears who was also a regular session musician for Bob Dylan and the Rolling Stones. "The appearance of this guitar on the market offers collectors a rare opportunity to acquire a genuinely owned and played Hendrix stratocaster," said a Sotheby's spokesman of the September 17 sale.

Magician Copperfield sues Paris Match for defamation

LOS ANGELES (R) — Magician David Copperfield launched what could be his greatest trick — prying \$30 million damages from Paris Match magazine for alleging his romance with supermodel Claudia Schiffer was a sham. "That claim is absolutely false in every respect," said his defamation suit filed in Los Angeles superior court against the French magazine's publishers and a rival magician, Herbert Becker. It said Paris Match — "a sensationalist photo magazine" — had spread around the world that the couple pretended to be romantically involved, but that Schiffer was actually being paid by Copperfield to accompany him and pretend to be his fiancée.



ORIGINAL SHAKESPEARE AT JERASH

Performers of the British troupe the Original Shakespeare Company grab the audience at the Jerash festival Thursday and Friday as they played Midsummer Night's Dream (Photo by Youssef Allan)